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AMERICAN HEROES  
AND  
HERO-WORSHIP

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*Books by*  
**GERALD W. JOHNSON**

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**RANDOLPH OF ROANOKE**

**A LITTLE NIGHT-MUSIC**

**AMERICA'S SILVER AGE**

**ROOSEVELT: DICTATOR OR DEMOCRAT**

# *American Heroes*

AND

## *Hero-Worship*

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GERALD W. JOHNSON

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*I returned, and saw under the sun, that the  
race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong,  
nor yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of  
understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill;  
but time and chance happeneth to them all.*

—ECCLESIASTES, ix: 11

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TO  
THE MEMORY OF  
E. F. SAXTON  
COUNSELLOR, GUIDE,  
ENHEARTENER, FRIEND

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AMERICAN HEROES  
AND  
HERO-WORSHIP



## CHAPTER I

### *The Ever-Changing Past*

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ALTHOUGH H. G. Wells' remark that war is the result of bad history teaching can be supported by plausible argument, it does not follow that the program for universal peace can be reduced to the sweet simplicity of these three words: Hang the professors!

This is, perhaps, regrettable. Hanging someone is a quick, neat, and inexpensive method of dealing with annoyances of all degrees of gravity, from sheep-stealing to war, and has, therefore, always been in favor with authorities. But it never accomplished the abolition of sheep-stealing and there is little reason to suppose that it could accomplish the abolition of war.

The efficacy of the remedy, of course, is not in question. The thief who felt the halter draw never stole again. John Brown made no second war. The failure comes through the circumstance that the hanged man is always only partially responsible for the crime, and the remedy is ineffectual because it is only partially applied. Summary execution of all history professors in America would, indeed, prevent them from doing any more bad teaching, but it would not prevent bad teaching; for time and circum-

stance, manners and customs, tradition and prejudice, all teach history and teach it badly. The professors, indeed, are our only correctives; their instruction is open to criticism, certainly, but at least they have made some effort to adjust it to reality, and without them we should have no anchor or mooring line at all.

Yet there is little doubt that if the American people had possessed a correct understanding of history they would have pursued a different course after the war of 1914-18, and perhaps that course might have prevented the outbreak of war in 1939. There is even less doubt that if the German people had understood history they would not have been deceived by the nonsense of Adolf Hitler; and that almost certainly would have prevented the outbreak of the second world war. Misunderstanding of the past unquestionably has led to the confusions of the present, including the summation of all confusion, the chaos of war.

If the professors, however, have been, as a class, doing their best to be accurate, who has been tampering with the records of the past? Who has diverted us from the right path and led us into the wilderness? Who is the cosmic liar deserving the professional attention of Jack Ketch?

The answer is, no man, and yet every man. The written records are, in general, true. Columbus did discover America in 1492. Independence was declared in 1776. Historians are perpetually discovering minor errors, to be sure, but in general the factual content of history texts is accurate. But the significance of an event is in the mind of him who hears of it, and as his mind changes the significance changes. Moreover, the events are recorded in the language of the historian and the language itself changes from generation

to generation. In the time of "the most high and mighty prince James" a group of men who were very learned and utterly sincere quoted the Psalmist as saying, "I prevented the dawning of the morning." In a later century Edward Gibbon who, whatever else may be said against him, certainly had no desire to appear absurd, repeatedly declared that one general "oppressed" another in such-and-such a campaign. Alterations so gross perhaps carry their own corrective; the stupidest reader encountering them will realize that something is wrong and will find out, if he does not know, that "prevent" once meant "anticipate" and "oppress" meant "overwhelm." But for every such radical change in the meanings of words there are a thousand subtler alterations, many of them so slight that even an educated and intelligent reader may not take them into account, and yet, in sum, swinging the meaning of a passage far away from the intent of the writer.

More insidious, and therefore harder to keep in balance than changes in the language of historians, are changes in the point of view of readers. Only a year or so ago as celebrated a personage as Upton Sinclair asserted that the most over-rated book in the world is "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire"; Sinclair considers it almost valueless because Gibbon paid little or no attention to the sociological aspect of the story. Seventy-five years ago the same book was held in light esteem by earnest thinkers, but not for the same reason; its fault then was that it paid so little attention to the economic aspects of the story. Possibly seventy-five years hence men will consider its great fault the fact that Gibbon knew nothing about genes or, per-

haps, wave mechanics, or, more likely, some theory whose very name is unknown to us today.

There is occasionally, of course, a deliberate effort to falsify the record made sometimes by bad but more frequently by good people. The effort, for a long time successful, to convince the world that Woodrow Wilson said we were too proud to fight in the European war was based, in part, on partisan bitterness. What Wilson really said was, of course, that there is such a thing as being too proud to fight an opponent who is hopelessly outclassed, the country he had in mind being Mexico, not Germany. Few people would quarrel with the statement as it was actually made, and many people wished to quarrel with Wilson; so the statement was distorted with motives that, in some cases, were low. But Parson Weems' story of the boy George Washington and the cherry tree was more than distortion, it was outright fabrication; yet there was no bitterness or malice behind it. The reverend author lied from the highest motives; he sought the edification and moral elevation of youth.

Fabrication and wilful distortion are, however, usually detected and corrected in the course of time. Their principal effect is immediate and tends to diminish; it is the misconceptions based on slow, gradual and unnoted alterations in language, in point of view, in circumstances, in shifts of interest that tend to increase with the passage of time, as diverging lines grow farther apart the farther they are projected, until they produce a separation from reality great enough to give rise to immeasurable confusion and even to war.

The notion that nothing can alter the past is an abstrac-

tion whose technical truth is more deceptive than any but the most insidious of lies. As regards the noumenal past, the past which exists only as a philosophical concept, it may be true enough; but what of it, since we have no means of apprehending that past? As for the past which exists because it exerts force, the past which influences the thoughts and acts of men in the present, it is not true. On the contrary, nothing changes more constantly than the past; for the past that influences our lives, as William A. Dunning pointed out long ago, does not consist of what actually happened, but of what men believe happened. It is not upon the event that we act, but upon our belief about that event.

Robert E. Lee once lived and is now dead. At the moment of his death the whole personality known as Lee became part of the past. Yet there has been and is now a force modifying the attitudes and to some extent the acts of men now living; we call this influence Lee, but it is in fact not the personality itself but the totality of men's beliefs about Lee. Obviously, those beliefs have not remained static, certainly not in that part of the country that never joined the Confederacy. In the North, and to a lesser extent in the South, Lee has not remained the same man for the past seventy years. For awhile he was a traitor, then he became a hero, and at this moment he seems to be in some danger of being erected into a demi-god. That part of the past has altered and continues to alter.

In this country the War of 1812 remained for a hundred years a victory over England, then it became a military victory of England over the United States followed by a diplomatic victory of this country which made the



final outcome a stalemate. But if you ask the average Englishman about it—that is, if you had asked him before 1940, when Dr. Allan Nevins went over to Oxford and arranged things differently—you will find that the War of 1812 doesn't exist. It has no effect on living Englishmen's thoughts and acts because they don't know that it ever was fought. There is an example, not of a man, but an event of the past that has altered to the verge of obliteration.

It is certainly true that an event doesn't always lose its influence over our lives by being forgotten. Readers of Sir James Frazer, not to mention Dr. Sigmund Freud, are aware of the multitude of our habits and activities that may be traced to obscure and long-forgotten causes. It may be that many go to church on Sunday morning, a definite, overt act, because some primordial ancestor quaked and shed tears and sweat in the cavern of Mas d'Azil when the thunder-god roared; yet the church-goers certainly do not remember the event and may not even know the name of Mas d'Azil. These urges that come from completely forgotten sources are, perhaps, the truly unalterable past. The things that are inexplicable because they go back beyond memory are the hardest to alter. For the very reason that they cannot be explained one expects to see no change in men's flinching when lightning blazes, in women's screaming at sight of a mouse, in Vermonters' voting Republican and Georgians' voting Democratic. But if one disregards these and restricts consideration to rational acts, it is plain that they are influenced by a past that is constantly changing, that is never the same from generation to generation and hardly from year to year.

The task of professors of history is not the impossible job of preventing alterations in our conceptions of the past

and therefore alterations in the attitudes we derive from the past, but to guide these unpreventable alterations along lines that have some consistent relation with the factual content of the record. John Hancock was a smuggler. John Hancock was a signer of the Declaration of Independence. Our estimate of John Hancock as a model and inspiration to youth may, and does, vary as we give the major part of our attention to one phase of his career, or to the other. For a professor of history to emphasize one phase may be better teaching than to emphasize the other; but no teaching can be called absolutely bad unless it emphasizes one phase to the total exclusion of the other.

German history teaching within recent years has been the worst in the world, but not because it emphasized the fact that the Germans are a great nation. It is bad because it completely ignored the fact that other nations are great nations, too, one of them being the Scattered Nation, vaguely known as Israel.

Obviously the business of keeping the changing past somehow related to the factual content of the record is not easy or simple. The professors have a thankless task, and if they do not perform it perfectly, surely the remedy is not to hang them, but rather to make some effort to comprehend their difficulties; for that will result in a disposition to praise what they do, instead of liquidating them for their relatively minor failures.

For they are combating antagonists of the most formidable type. The widespread impression that honest historians need only defeat the efforts of villains who deliberately distort history to serve their own ends is an appalling oversimplification. Villains can be disposed of

summarily, and with relative ease. Even the gentry who are engaged in lying for high moral purposes, after the fashion of Parson Weems are, as a rule, rather vulnerable, and not very much harder to handle than the out-and-out rascals.

The real test of the teachers and writers of history, the fight in which they are mown down in windrows and from which the few survivors emerge breathless, reeling and all forspent, is when they contend against no human antagonist, but the errors that creep in through gradual, unnoted changes in language, in manners, in circumstances, in habits of thought, errors that are assisted by man's enormous capacity to believe whatever he finds it pleasant or convenient to believe. In this sort of fight the historian is contending, not merely against the outside world, but also against himself; for, being himself mortal man, he is open to all the influences that render the rest of us so often allergic to truth, so happily content with soft and seductive lies. It is written that "He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city," and without doubt a teacher of history who controls his own tendency to err is greater than one who discovers any number of errors in Beard or Toynebee.

Any man equipped with very moderate intelligence and a fairly retentive memory by spending in a library a number of hours smaller than the average layman believes can become acquainted with the more important facts recorded in the chronicles of the race. But the fact that he knows what is written in the records is no guarantee that he can teach history. In the first place, just as the average man is acquainted with many people whom he does not really know, so one may be acquainted with innumerable facts

that he does not in the least understand; which is another way of saying that a pedant is not necessarily a scholar.

For that matter, a man may be a genuinely great scholar and remain a bad teacher. First to learn, and then to understand, makes a scholar, but not a teacher; for a teacher must be able to convey to another mind what he has learned and understood. The ability to convey information to pupils implies ability to speak the language of the present, and that is a branch of knowledge not to be mastered in libraries. For the language of the present is not composed entirely of words plus certain rules as to their orderly arrangement; it includes a host of other matters—attitudes, habits of thought, environmental influences, all that differentiates the intellectual life of this generation from that of its predecessors. A great teacher knows much more than that “prevent” in modern parlance doesn’t mean merely “anticipate.” He will have some inkling of what it is that impels a modern young man to buy a zoot suit, and why the sort of young woman who, half a century ago, would have swooned at the introduction of obstetrical terminology into casual conversation, now swoons at nothing except, perhaps, the idea that she ought to swoon.

A good teacher of history knows, in short, that the past exists only as it is reflected in the mind of the present; and he knows that it is not only reflected, but refracted. His teaching must be designed to correct that error, which means that he must know the angle of refraction, never exactly the same in two successive generations. The perfect teacher of history, therefore, would know perfectly not only the records of the past, but also the mind of the present, which would make him the master of all philoso-

phy. There is no such teacher, there never has been, and never will be as long as all men are fallible. To assume, therefore, that bad teaching of history, which produces wars, can be corrected by hanging the professors, is impractical idealism.

But to admit that they are not solely responsible for the conditions that provoked Mr. Wells' dismal comment, is by no means to admit that Americans, in the mass, are incapable of attaining a better comprehension of the processes that have brought them to their present level of civilization. Nor is it entirely fair for the layman to expect the professional historian to do all the work. There are certain techniques, of course, in which the professional is adept, and these should be left in his hands. This may be done with confidence, for the technical proficiency of the American historian is high. I refer to such things as the discovery and deciphering of original sources, the verification of disputed points, the judicious evaluation of contradictory evidence, the summarization of facts and their orderly and charming presentation. In this, the technical part of the historian's work, I believe the native ability, rigorous training, and intellectual integrity of the profession in America command the respect of the world.

But when this much is accomplished, the technician is through, and in whatever goes beyond this the historian depends, not upon his special training, but upon his knowledge of the world he lives in and of his neighbors who inhabit it with him; and in this he may, or may not, be superior to the man next door.

There is one point, in particular, on which historians have suffered much unjust criticism. It is their complete

inability to explain the process of the manufacture of heroes. Heroes, barring such purely mythical concepts as Wotan, Paul Bunyan and the Strong and Silent Coolidge, are invariably chosen from history, hence it is assumed that historians should be able to speak authoritatively on the subject of their creation. But that assumption is a *non sequitur*, for although most heroes were once historical personages, their erection into heroes is not necessarily, nor even commonly, a historical process. "Time and chance happeneth to them all," and the historian is no more an authority on time and chance than he is an authority on the planting of beans. He may be in his leisure hours an enthusiastic gardener, to be sure, and therefore know all about beans; and likewise he may be, in his leisure hours, a shrewd man of the world, and therefore know all about popular heroes; but in neither case is it his training as a historian that qualifies him.

The popular hero, although his name may figure in the history books, and although his mortal frame may have been pinned down for centuries by an ancient and lordly monument, is a creature of modernity, a Protean figure whose aspect changes completely as each new generation lays hold upon him. Heroes are created by popular demand, sometimes out of the scantiest materials, or none at all; and what does the historian know, more than you and I do, about popular demand?

I pass over such glaring instances as the apple that William Tell never shot, the ride that Paul Revere never finished, the flag that Barbara Frietchie never waved, for that simply transfers the heroic achievements to the three poets, Schiller, Longfellow and Whittier. There are innumerable

instances of the creation of a popular hero without the intervention of a poet, simply because the times demanded a hero.

Perhaps the most conspicuous instance in our own annals is the erection of John Brown, a homicidal maniac if ever there was one, into a martyr to truth and—most astounding of all—to humanitarianism. An entertaining example on the negative side—that is, the creation of a hero of a diabolical, rather than an angelic cast—is afforded by the reputation in the Southern States of the late William Tecumseh Sherman, General of the United States Army. To this day it is seriously believed by many Southerners that what Sherman did in the Confederate States was fairly comparable to what the Germans did in Poland. I speak by the book, for it so happened that the homes of both my grandfathers lay squarely in the line of Sherman's march, and in childhood I was an avid listener to tales that convinced me that here was indeed a fiend in human form. It is incontestably true that Sherman's bummers stole everything in sight, especially silverware, jewelry, and anything else easily transportable, and destroyed whatever they could not carry away. But they were under orders to devastate the country.

Yet by comparison with the conduct of invaders in the two great wars of this century, Sherman's men seem to have been rather an amiable, even jolly, crew. One of my grandfathers was high sheriff of the county, that is to say, an officer of the belligerent government, yet he was not shot, nor even thrown into a concentration camp. He was confined under guard in his own house, but not otherwise molested, nor were his wife and daughters subjected to

insult or injury; and after the passage of the troops, not even a guard was left. The rare instances of executions by Sherman seem to have been confined entirely to guerillas taken with arms in their hands. Wheeler, the Confederate commander whose cavalry followed Sherman, shot people right and left for revealing hidden property to the Yankees; but I have never heard a Southerner suggest that there was anything monstrous about Wheeler, whose ruthlessness was accepted as just retribution to traitors.

The truth seems to be that at the moment when John Brown was hanged, the Abolitionists desperately needed a hero. So, for lack of a better, even a man given to the peculiar sport of chopping pieces off living men with cavalry sabres could be made to serve; and when Sherman came through their country the Southerners as desperately needed a personal devil on whom to vent the bitterness of their despair, and the fact that the enemy commander was, as invaders go, a highly civilized and even considerate conqueror, did not stop them from identifying him with the Prince of the Powers of Darkness. Thus Brown and Sherman were elected in spite of, rather than because of, what they had done.

Is this process in conformity with any imaginable historical technique? Not at all. It is merely in conformity with human nature, which has a disconcerting way of flouting the canons of all intellectual disciplines.

Nevertheless, it is the process by which a great deal of what the masses of the people accept as history is made. It is the reason why able and conscientious gentlemen who have spent years perfecting themselves in the methodology



of historical research frequently develop a wild and helpless look, and a pessimism so sombre that they incline to credit the writer of Ecclesiastes with saying the final word on history: "I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all."

The cases of John Brown and W. T. Sherman are, of course, extreme—so much so that it has been fairly easy to readjust them. Even in Massachusetts today the holiness of John Brown is not accepted without question, and even in my grandfather's county there are those who admit that Sherman, after all, might have been worse. Brown and Sherman were deliberately singled out as emotional vents; and as emotion subsided people began to realize that love and hatred had probably led them too far.

Much more difficult are those cases in which emotion figured inconspicuously, if at all, in which Americans have regarded historical characters calmly and without conscious prejudice, favorable or unfavorable. Passion notoriously disturbs judgment, so we are on guard against it or, later, when we realize that passion figured in the case we are the more ready to concede that our judgment may have been distorted. But when passion doesn't enter at all and our estimate is made unemotionally, then conviction becomes adamant, and any question of the accuracy of the picture seems fantastic. Nevertheless, "time and chance," the imperceptible influence of a new environment, new habits of thought, new interests and new emphases, may be as powerful as emotion in creating a view

of the past that is totally at variance with the factual record. Then arise the ironies of history, which may be the despair of conscientious historians, but which the layman who studies them is likely to find productive of as much delight as dismay.

For they are not, as a matter of fact, always necessarily evil in their effects. Consider, for example, the irony of the state of mind of the fifty-five men who had just finished writing the Constitution of the United States. We all know that sixteen were so disgusted that they refused to sign the thing; what we frequently forget is that the other thirty-nine were, to a man, somewhat disgusted. Nobody looked upon the product of their labors as other than a wretched, patched-up, rickety compromise. If a prophet had told them that within a century a Prime Minister of Great Britain would characterize it as "the most wonderful work ever struck off at a given time by the brain and purpose of man" undoubtedly they would have considered the prophet a madman.

Yet we know now that the Constitution has stood up for the better part of two centuries precisely because it was a compromise. We know that is the only reason it was ratified in the first place; for it took yeoman labor by all factions to secure its ratification. If the document had been one that Hamilton thoroughly approved, Jefferson would have damned it; and Hamilton as certainly would have blocked ratification of a Constitution that Jefferson really liked. It is the irony of history that only by driving the convention to disgust and despair was the "wonderful work" secured—irony, yes, but surely not pernicious.

It is a curious fact that although it is easy to discover

startling ironies throughout the history of the republic, it is not by any means as easy to establish proof that they have been disastrous, or even materially detrimental to the country. Frequently the defeat of men's purposes, even the purposes of great and good men, has been incontestably beneficial, as it was when James Madison and Alexander Hamilton both suffered what each regarded as a defeat in the Constitutional Convention. There is a vitality in the American idea that for nearly a century and three-quarters has carried it through crises that the best and wisest men were convinced must destroy it. It is almost as if the Ship of State were equipped with a gyroscopic compass that holds it on its course automatically, regardless of the forces of wind and current, regardless, even, of the efforts of the crew.

This steadying influence is, of course, no god in the machine, no mystical destiny, but Lincoln's final perspicuity of the people. You can't fool all of them all the time.

But this is a statistical quality, therefore difficult for many people to comprehend. In any specific case the people are as likely to be wrong as to be right—"you can fool all of the people some of the time." In certain kinds of cases, they are more likely to be wrong than to be right—"you can fool some of the people all of the time." But in a thousand cases taken at random they will always be right oftener than they will be wrong; and that is why the republic has survived.

This would be an entirely comfortable doctrine were it not for the one flaw that affects all statistical computation. For the people to be right, certainly, inevitably right, they must have a number of chances sufficiently

large to make the laws of statistics operative. Unfortunately, it is easily imaginable that the people might be wrong just once under circumstances that would wipe out the republic and put an end to the series of occurrences. The fact that they will always be right in the long run is irrelevant if there is to be no long run.

This is the consideration that justifies the lives and labors of historians. To the extent that men's beliefs about what happened in the past are consistent with what did happen in the past, their judgments of what they should do in the present are likely to be consistent with reality, or, as we usually put it, sound.

A case very much to the point is the myth that we rejected the treaty of Versailles after the last war because we objected to the international injustices written into that treaty. This is firmly believed—or was until the outbreak of the present war—by millions of Americans, perhaps by a majority. As a matter of fact, the Treaty of Berlin, signed August 25, 1921, which formally established peace with Germany, ratified precisely those parts of the Treaty of Versailles which have been most widely condemned as unjust to Germany, and rejected the ameliorating clauses. We ratified the clauses relating to colonies and mandates, to reparations, to the military occupation of Germany, and to war guilt. We rejected the clauses relating to the League of Nations, to the International Labor organization, to boundaries in Europe, and to plebiscites to determine sovereignty. In short, our treaty imposed upon Germany all of Clemenceau's most ruthless exactions, and granted her none of his concessions. The

United States was far harder on Germany than was the Tiger of France.

Perhaps our course would have been precisely the same, if we had realized this; but it is unimaginable that our attitude would have been quite the same. We have been crediting ourselves with a humanitarianism that we did not exhibit; and, naturally, acquiring thereby a reputation for hypocrisy. There is an ironical touch in American history that has been pernicious.

The study of such cases is, therefore, something rather more than simply an amusement, although no one who appreciates the human comedy will fail to be entertained. It may contribute somewhat to straighter thinking about the problems that confront us today, and with which we must deal by such light as we have.

For my own part, in these studies of the ironies of American history I have found, in addition to much entertainment and some enlightenment, a third reward. This reward is a measure of comfort.

Heaven knows the American with any concern about his country's destiny needs comfort. I do not mean by that salves and unguents for the wounds we have received from our armed enemies. I do not mean reparations for the economic losses we have incurred, nor even consolation for the physical perils we must risk in the future.

But any man must perceive that we are called upon to do something harder by far than the titanic effort we have put forth on the battlefield. We carry a large, if not the largest, responsibility for the peace of the whole world, not in the immediate future only, but for many years to come. We did not choose this responsibility. It was thrust

upon us by the mere growth of our military and economic strength. That power is now so formidable that it is not matched, much less overshadowed, by that of any other single nation.

If the events of the twenty years between wars have any significance at all, they prove that it is idle to expect the development of any sensible, or even civilized *modus vivendi* among nations as long as international order is so patently insecure that its breakdown is momentarily expected. Order must be maintained, and maintained for a long period, if rational international relations are to be developed; and, for the next twenty years at least, if it is to be maintained, order must be supported by overwhelming force. On our own frontier a few decades ago when no recognized government existed, honest men agreed that he who had the strength to maintain order had the duty to do so. A rancher with a dozen straight-shooting cowhands in his employ was a dirty dog if he refused to take an active part along with his weaker neighbors, in the hard and perilous business of suppressing banditry. The fact that the rancher might not be a peace officer had nothing to do with it. He had the rifles; therefore he could not escape the duty of using them for the common good.

In the community of nations there is no recognized government at present, and the failure of Geneva is proof that the task of erecting one that will be even tolerable is likely to be a long and arduous task, which cannot be accomplished at all in a world filled with incessant uproars and quaking with terror. Somebody must maintain order while the deliberations are in progress; and upon whom does that responsibility rest more heavily than upon the

nation best able to do it? Uncle Sam never was a candidate for high sheriff, and emphatically does not desire the office; but he has the rifles, and if the bandits are to be kept down, he is elected to the job, not by the ballots of his neighbors, but by circumstances beyond his and their control.

But the history of the Vigilantes is not reassuring reading. Over and over, with monotonous reiteration, it leads to the same dismal conclusion: "All power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely." The American people, at this moment, are distinctly not imperialistic, but if they assume the character, for whatever reason, how long will it be before they begin to delight in the role?

The alternative, to go on indefinitely, risking our lives, our liberties and our substance in a terrific war every twenty-five years, is too hideous to be considered. Yet to avoid it we must either impose a *Pax Americana* upon the world, or perform a miracle—hold and exercise power, yet not be corrupted by it.

Think of the wisdom, the forbearance, the nicely balanced judgment, the extreme foresight and the endless patience that would be required of a nation that would impose order upon the community of nations for years running into decades, and then would quietly surrender dominion and itself submit to regularly constituted authority; and then think of the qualifications of the American people for that great task! Hold in abeyance all questions relating to the other continents and the seas and consider first what it would be necessary for us to do at home before we could hope to succeed. Not to speak of isolationism, think of the rigor with which we must hold in check our tariff hogs, our concession hunters, our

farm bloc, our greedy and obscurantist labor unions, our slave-driving industrialists, each and all of whom would be howling for legislation that would shatter all confidence in our good faith! We have never been able to control this Belial's rout for our own salvation; shall we be able to control it for the benefit first, although not finally, of Germans and Italians?

By every rule of logic, by every dictate of plain common sense, the thing is patently impossible; yet we are in for it. Willy-nilly, we must make the effort, for the only other way out is to impose a tyranny which eventually will meet the fate of all tyrannies and end in a resumption of the old cycle of wars. "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?" Yet America is confronted with the necessity of becoming, not in the far distant future, but here and now, without a moment's delay, greater than any nation has been since history began; or of marching straight into ruin.

In this dilemma are we not as good as ruined already? Is there any reason in logic or common sense for assuming that we shall be equal to the task? I see none. Yet I am restrained from giving way to despair by the consideration that there never was much reason in logic or common sense for the establishment or the survival of this nation. The revolt of three million squirrel-hunters against the most formidable power on earth was neither logical nor sensible; and the success of that revolt was more aberrant still. A dozen times since, the wisest men living, including plenty of Americans, have proved with irrefutable logic that the end of the republic was at hand; and it survived without rhyme or reason.



A young man soared into tremendous, if transient fame a few years ago by setting out in an airplane ostensibly for California and landing in Ireland. He blandly explained that he had merely lost his way in a fog. There is some reason for holding that Wrong-Way Corrigan is a better exemplar of his country than was Lindbergh, who chose his mark and flew straight to it; for the annals of America are full of stories of men who set out for California and brought up in Ireland. Somewhere logic and common sense went off the rails. Somewhere expert opinion proved to be wholly worthless. The carefully calculated results failed to materialize and what couldn't happen did.

This disorderly aspect of human existence is a severe trial to tidy minds, and perhaps in ordinary times it may be among those embarrassing demands of nature that in polite society are carefully ignored. But when the times are not ordinary, when a crisis is upon us and all our science and all our reasoning can see no way out, when America, in sober truth, stands between the Devil and the deep blue sea, then it is not dismaying, but rather comforting to remember that American history has always been a mocker of tidy minds, flouting the rules of logic and puckishly upsetting the dictates of common sense.

For what has happened before may happen again. Who knows? Perhaps Corrigan will land in Ireland once more. Perhaps this country being, like B'rer Rabbit, 'bleeged to climb, will climb; being compelled to be great, will exhibit the wisdom, the courage and the grace we dare not believe it has, and will climb above its difficulties and above itself, to stand among the stars.

*Clarum et Venerabile Nomen*

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HE WAS a babbler and a dreamer. He was credulous in the extreme. He was amazingly indiscreet. He was a man of sudden and unbounded enthusiasms, careering off like a rocket when fired by a new idea. He was an impractical idealist, full of noble projects that wouldn't work. He was the predestined, heaven-appointed victim of every intellectual faddist and self-appointed messiah of his time. He was an honest bureaucrat, a shrewd diplomatist, a sound scholar. He was a bit of a jackass and a great gentleman. He was Pierre-Samuel Du Pont de Nemours, founder of a giant industrial dynasty.

To say that he took off for California and landed in Ireland is a pale and ineffectual way to indicate the irony of this man's destiny. He came to this country for the purpose of founding a sort of Utopia in the wilderness. He meant to establish in the young republic a colony of Frenchmen, but not just any sort of French. His were to be chosen spirits, men with souls above the stupid game of grab into which the first republic had degenerated by 1799. He meant to found a community composed of such men as once gathered with him in the apartment of the

learned Dr. Quesnay in the palace of Versailles during the reign of Louis XV., honorable men, learned men, brilliant men, idealistic men. He meant to found an asylum in which men might live free in mind, free in body, free in spirit, unawed by power and uncorrupted by greed. What he actually founded was the firm of Dupont.

In France they know, or think they know, Pierre-Samuel Du Pont de Nemours very well indeed. Any French scholar can identify him as readily as any American scholar can identify, say, George William Curtis; and each might be described in somewhat the same terms—that is, as the literary exponent of social and economic theories since exploded, but once widely accepted.

Exceptionally well-informed Frenchmen of today may have a more or less vague impression that Du Pont de Nemours had something to do with America, and a few may have heard that he had a son who settled in this country and did pretty well, financially. But in France the important things about the man are that he was, along with Mirabeau, the mouthpiece of Quesnay, and, later, the biographer of Turgot. Maybe he did set up some sort of manufacturing establishment in the United States; but are such trifles worth mentioning in connection with a scholar?

Well, let the French<sup>1</sup> have it their way, if they like.

<sup>1</sup> It is only fair to acknowledge, at this point, that it is to a French scholar I owe the bulk of the information about Du Pont de Nemours included in this chapter. Dr. Gilbert Chinard's edition of the correspondence of Jefferson and Du Pont de Nemours, published in 1931 by the Johns Hopkins University Press, is the principal source. Dr. Chinard, however, a member of the Princeton faculty and a distinguished writer of English, is scarcely a typical French scholar; and he, himself, comments on the unanimity with which Frenchmen have ignored Du Pont's American connection.

Perhaps his scholarship was, in fact, the only thing about the man that had any lasting influence upon France. But Americans can hardly adopt that point of view, for the rise of the House of Dupont is one of the most spectacular chapters in our economic history. That in itself is enough to make him an important figure to us, because the industrial empires that have risen in America have had much more effect upon the lives of Americans than ever was exerted by many of our political institutions. Has Oglethorpe, who founded the State of Georgia, exerted anything like as strong an influence upon the lives of anything like as many Americans, as has been exerted by Rockefeller, who founded the Standard Oil Company? One established a State, the other merely a business corporation; but which had most to do with making us what we are today?

It is taken for granted that every American schoolboy ought to know something about William Penn, because he colonized one of the States. It is not enough to know that he organized and financed the settlement of Pennsylvania. It is assumed that every American ought to learn something about the man in order to understand our national history. The fact that Penn was a Quaker, the status of Quakers in England during his life, Penn's personal relations with the King—such matters are regarded as properly a part of American history, since they make it more easily understandable.

But if it is desirable to have some acquaintance with the background of the man who set up Pennsylvania, what about him who set up Dupont? Every man who strips the cellophane wrapping off a cigar, every woman who buys

a pair of artificial silk stockings pays tribute to Dupont. The American guns flaming on battle fronts that circled three-quarters of the earth were fed with Dupont powder. The coal that drives our factories was, in large measure, ripped from the earth with Dupont dynamite. The paint that camouflaged our ships and war industries was made, to a great extent, with Dupont pigments. Not many of us are still affected directly by what William Penn started, but what Pierre-Samuel Du Pont de Nemours started reaches into every home in the land and touches the life of almost every American citizen.

Sometimes investigation of a man who founded a great industrial, or commercial, or financial enterprise brings out the fact that he has no background. When you say, "He thrust a quarter into the slot, hit the jackpot, and cascades of quarters fell into his hands," you have said everything that is of the slightest interest. The fact that this Frenchman prospered is of no great moment, and the fact that his descendants prospered colossally is of interest mainly to economists and sociologists. But when you realize that the progenitor of perhaps the richest of all American families did not come to this country to make money, and that the founder of one of the greatest of our industrial satrapies disliked and distrusted industrialism, the ironical element appears and the man begins to pick up interest. If he didn't come here to make money, and if he opposed the introduction of industrialism, then what brought him, and what did he think he was doing?

He was an unusual man, and it must have been an unusual country that attracted him. He was emphatically not a self-seeker, so the United States in his day could not have

been regarded as a land of Cockaigne, where roast pigs ran about with carving-knives stuck in their backs and pies could be picked off the trees. In fact, the qualities that made him admirable, also made him come to this country; and that throws a strong and very pleasant light upon our country.

He was a product of the intellectual ferment that agitated France during the reign of the last Louis. He was born plain Du Pont, a name as common in France as its equivalent, Briggs, was in England. He belonged to the upper middle class, not to the nobility; his mother was a cousin of Joubert, one of the *Encyclopedistes*, and young Du Pont from his earliest youth was accustomed to the society of intellectuals; as was customary with young intellectuals of the time, he entered the governmental service, and made an excellent record, rising to the rank of Councillor of State and eventually acquiring, for services rendered, a patent of nobility which gave him the legal right to add the honorific "de Nemours" to his name.

His career as a bureaucrat, however, is not what turned his attention to this country. It was his intellectual and emotional development, rather than his political career. Born in 1739, he came to maturity at the moment when intelligent men were beginning to find the cynical hedonism that had characterized the reign of Louis XV. empty, flat and stupid and were busying themselves in the erection of speculative systems more nearly approaching the ideal.

This is a phenomenon familiar enough to our generation, for the twentieth century has been stirred by the same impulse. Du Pont de Nemours threw himself into the

movement with characteristic enthusiasm. He became the sort of man that describes himself, in our day, as a Liberal, and is described by his non-admirers as a Parlor Pink. In his official capacity he frequented the court, and at Versailles he came under the influence of that curious genius François Quesnay, who was, on the official register, the king's physician, by smiling designation of the king himself "the king's thinker," and in sober fact perhaps the king's best talker.

In the palace of Versailles the royal physician had been assigned apartments on the *entresol*, or what modern Americans usually call the mezzanine floor. Here the doctor, whose professional duties were certainly not onerous, was accustomed to gather a select group, consisting largely of young men, for discussion of every subject under heaven with the exception of medicine. In the main, however, the talk centered around the new and fascinating subject—hardly as yet a science—of political economy. Most of the members of the group were bursting with ideas; in addition to Du Pont de Nemours, the elder Mirabeau was a member, Turgot was a member, de Gournay was frequently present, although rather as a colleague than as a disciple of Quesnay. In 1765 a gentleman already distinguished as a Doctor of Laws of the University of Glasgow showed up in Paris and for about a year followed Quesnay's arguments closely, incorporating many of them, ten years later, in a book that for a century stood as the very Holy Writ of economics. This visitor was Adam Smith, author of "The Wealth of Nations."

It is no wonder that these *reunions de l'entresol*, or as we would say, "mezzanine meetings" presently became

famous all over France. Quesnay seems to have been one of the best talkers in one of the most talkative societies in history, and his apartment was probably as fine a school of conversation as ever existed. No doubt there was too much talk and too little action; no doubt furious Carlyle was justified in calling it the Age of Paper with its pillars of state but gilt-pasteboard caryatides; but they had ideas, these men of the mezzanine, even if they had no idea of how to make them work.

In this group Du Pont discharged the function of the popularizer. However well he talked, Quesnay was an almost fabulously bad writer and apparently he was himself aware that his crabbed, dry prose was unreadable, as far as the general public was concerned. He appears to have been content to have his ideas presented to the world by Mirabeau and Du Pont, a task which they performed with assiduity. And it is almost entirely from what they wrote that we have our knowledge of what Quesnay thought. It was Du Pont de Nemours, in fact, who gave Quesnay's doctrine its very name, "Physiocracy." The acquisition of a clear, persuasive style thus became for the younger man a matter of importance rising above his personal satisfaction. It was essential for him to use words cleverly in order to propagate the ideas which aroused his enthusiasm.

There is something extraordinarily attractive about these eighteenth-century French thinkers. They had, in the main, no axes to grind. Take Quesnay, for example—his position, as physician-in-chief to the King, was an exalted one, the very summit of his profession. He could not improve it, but his personal interest dictated the devotion of



all his energies and intelligence to consolidating and strengthening it. Perhaps, indeed, he chose the best method to achieve that end, in view of the character of Louis XV., but there is not the slightest reason to believe that in plunging into the study of economics he had any personal advantage in view.

It may be argued with a certain plausibility that it was the extreme corruption of the old order that accounts for the production of this astonishingly disinterested group. By the time Quesney died, in 1774, the existing system in France was probably gone beyond hope. In any event, the condition of the country was so appalling that no rational man could fail to realize the menace, even though the more optimistic cherished the belief that something could yet be done. A crisis of that sort does discourage the more blatant forms of self-seeking, and in a man whose impulses are patriotic to begin with it may produce a pure flame of patriotism. Be the cause what it may, the fact remains that at the moment when the old order was crumbling into ruin, at a moment, perhaps, when no human power could have saved it, there was an extraordinary flowering of intellectuality linked with honesty. The list of able Frenchmen at this time sincerely and unselfishly devoted to the good of France is a long one, but the most conspicuous name on it is that of the man who brought Du Pont de Nemours prominently into the public service, Anne Robert Jacques Turgot, Baron de Laune.

Any man who served under Turgot, as Du Pont did, must have emerged from the experience psychologically conditioned in certain definite ways. It is not at all difficult for Americans of this generation to understand the senti-

ments with which he went into office. All that is necessary is to turn our thoughts back to March 4, 1933, for the *philosophes* of 1774 were filled with the same mingled enthusiasm and relief based, in part, on the same considerations. It was their belief, when Turgot was called to power, that now, at last, the country was to have an administration based on scientifically trained intelligence. It was their happy conviction that such an administration could not fail, for science knew all the answers, or could find them. When the administration nevertheless did fail, the shock was painful, but the explanation was easy, much too easy. The scientifically trained intelligence had simply never had a chance. Turgot was thrown out after less than two years, and the *philosophes* attributed his fall to the machinations of evil minds. Some said the Queen's party was responsible, some said Polignac's, some said the Duc de Choiseul's; but that dirty work had been done, none doubted, and that the dirty work was responsible for the failure was beyond doubt.

Du Pont de Nemours accepted all this without question. He went into office superbly confident that Turgot knew what ailed the country and how to apply the necessary remedy; and he came out of office—like his chief, at high speed—never doubting that base persons had encompassed the downfall of the true, the beautiful, and the good. The truth is, of course, that Turgot made the fundamental error that was made by the Brain Trust of a later day—he innocently assumed that government is a science, and that the economic system is a machine; perhaps he was temperamentally unable to believe otherwise, and certainly he did not stay in office long enough to learn that govern-

ment is an art, one of the subdivisions of the art of dramaturgy, and that the national economy is an organism, a product of growth, not of construction. Hence application of the scientific method in a purely scientific way was hopeless in his case, as it has been hopeless ever since. Histrionics, of course, like all the other dramatic arts, is based on scientific principles, but science is only the basis on which the actor builds a high superstructure. Turgot had the science, which is to say, the basis of the histrionic art which is government, but he had no inkling of how to erect the superstructure.

There is a highly modernistic element in the account of the woes of the unfortunate minister. We have seen the same thing, over and over, within the memory of this generation. John Purroy Mitchel, in New York City, for example, and Herbert Hoover, in the United States, experienced in some measure the distresses of Turgot, for they, too, proceeded on the fatal assumption that it is enough for a ruler to be honest and intelligent; and both came to grief for lack of the ability to enchant the orchestra pit and the gallery, an ability that may be, but is not necessarily, allied with either honesty or intelligence. Turgot believed to the end that in attempting to reorganize the economic system of France he was doing the work of an engineer. He never got it through his head that he was in reality discharging the function of a surgeon, which is as much art as science. He never understood why it was that when he saw an obvious, a blatant evil in front of him and struck it, there would be a terrific explosion of wrath behind him. The system of oppression and injustice that was sapping the strength of France was precisely the system that was giv-

ing its strength to the ruling class. Therefore, in attacking corruption, he was attacking the people who put him in power, and in whose power he was.

Least of all did he understand the position of the King. It is doubtless true that Louis XVI. was one of the weakest of monarchs; but it may be true that this very weakness explains why he survived as King of France for nineteen years. It is easy enough to say that a strong monarch might have saved France, but the assertion ignores the fact that a strong monarch might have been disposed of, either by assassination or by palace revolution, long before 1793. In any event, if Louis XVI. had backed Turgot in 1776 he would have been an entirely different sort of man, and he might have been a dead man. After all, Henry IV. was a strong King, but he was disposed of when the opposition was by no means as solidly united as it was against Turgot. The King really had no choice. Turgot had to go, because, with all his science, he did not understand the art of governing.

However, this was by no means clear at the time, and Du Pont de Nemours did not comprehend it. Neither did the other *philosophes* who saw in the downfall of Turgot nothing more than a manifestation of the Evil Spirit, and they continued to believe that if Science had had time to weave its spells and pronounce its incantations, the Devil would have been exorcised. Most of them died in that serene faith. They were disillusioned, to be sure, but not with the bitterest form of disillusionment; by 1793 they realized that they had underestimated disastrously the strength of the evil that rose up to oppose their system; they learned that the bad people were unexpectedly pow-

erful, but there was little to bring home to them an even more distressing realization, namely, that the good people were woefully weak—or, rather, that their system was.

Certainly this never came home to Du Pont de Nemours. As late as 1816, only a year before his death, he asked Jefferson to recommend someone to translate his treatise on education and Jefferson named a young Virginia scholar, Francis Walker Gilmer. Du Pont was satisfied with him as a translator, but delighted beyond measure when he evinced an interest in Quesnay. In the excitement of making a convert to Physiocracy he apparently forgot all about the translation, which disappeared and has never been recovered. It was over a hundred years later (1923) that Mrs. B. G. Du Pont made, and the University of Delaware Press published, a translation of the essay on education. To make a convert to Physiocracy was more important than to write on schools, for to the end he was happily certain that a governor who would apply the principles of political economy, by which he meant physiocracy, could not fail to create a happy and prosperous nation.

It is a common observation that in all the animal kingdom there is no creature more ferocious and more dangerous than a man who knows the answers to all questions. However, he becomes dangerous only when he is entrusted with power. Robespierre in Arras, like Hitler in Munich, seemed comic, rather than dangerous. The Physiocrats were never subjected to the disintegrating experience of uncontrolled power, for Turgot's brief term of office was served under controls far more rigid than those of constitutional rulers. Out of power, the enthusiast is, oftener than

not, an attractive figure, and the Physiocrats show up exceptionally well because the background against which they stand out consists of one of the most corrupt regimes in history.

Here were men sincerely interested in the good of France, and of the French people. Deluded they may have been—although modern Single Taxers will not concede that, since Physiocracy embodied something much like their doctrine—but self-seekers they were not, except to the extent that any man who aspires to improve the country in which he lives is a self-seeker. They obviously had too much faith in men's ability to act as reasoning beings; such faith is a failing, but it is an amiable failing. For the rest, they were among the most intelligent men of their time, they worked hard, and they were sure they saw light ahead, for France and for humanity. Against a dark background composed of the frivolity, the stupidity and the blatant and unashamed crookedness of the French court they show up as lustrous figures, and their greatest leader has come down in history laurelled with the eloquent designation of "Honest" Turgot.

All the evidence goes to show that Du Pont de Nemours was a worthy servant of such a master. During his brief tenure of office he did everything in his power to make a success of the administration, and he undoubtedly ascribed its collapse to the attacks of enemies, not to any inherent weakness in the policy of government by the application of scientific principles without much regard to the unscientific and, indeed, irrational quirks of human nature.

The fall of Turgot preceded by only a month or two the Declaration of American Independence and that event

gave the French theorists a basis for new hope. Political economy might not be able to unravel the tangled affairs of an ancient kingdom, such as France, but who could set limits to what it might accomplish in virgin soil? Events across the Atlantic were followed with intense interest by the group, an interest which began to assume a proprietary tinge as France joined the struggle and it proceeded to its triumphant conclusion. Du Pont de Nemours, like the others, studied American affairs assiduously, and at the end of the war had the satisfaction of participating in them, for he was recalled from his retirement by Vergennes, the Foreign Minister, to assist in negotiating the treaty of peace. He was clearly a valuable man, for it was his work in this connection, and also in the negotiation of a trade treaty with England in 1786, that caused the government to confirm his patent of nobility, making "de Nemours" definitely and legally part of his name. Under Calonne, as a Councillor of State, the good talker achieved his highest official position.

But it did not last long. In 1789 the storm broke. At the beginning of the French Revolution Du Pont de Nemours, like most Frenchmen of his class, had not the faintest notion of what it was all about. Indeed, he was inclined to welcome it as a means of sweeping away the evil influences that had ruined Turgot. It did that, all right, but by 1792 it was evident that it was doing vastly more. In those tragic and terrible days the Physiocrat, liberal though he was, spoke up sturdily for the King; but the time for talk was passed, and all that Du Pont accomplished was to set the police on his own trail. He dodged them successfully for nearly two years, but in 1794 they bagged him, and for

a time it seemed to be a foregone conclusion that the last talking he would do would be to Samson, the executioner.

But Samson got Robespierre first, and Du Pont emerged from La Force convinced again that the day of glory was arrived for Physiocracy. In spite of his experience, he persisted in believing that there was something more in the Directory than Calhoun's "cohesive power of public plunder." He set up a magazine in which he persistently called the attention of the Directorate to what was the obvious duty of honest men in the circumstances. Nothing could have been more annoying. As a matter of fact, it was somewhat inconsistent, for the motto its editor had chosen for *L'Historien*, the magazine that was his pulpit was *Nec spe nec metu*. To do him justice, there was remarkably little that Du Pont feared, but he hoped everything. His optimism was incorrigible, even pathological. Gallic to the fingertips as he was in other respects, he hoped like an American. He went to the incredible length of hoping that he could persuade the Directorate to act righteously and reasonably.

All he actually did, of course, was to make himself intolerable. His magazine was eventually suppressed, and a warrant was about to issue for the arrest of the editor when his friend, Madame De Staël intervened. She assured the authorities that Du Pont de Nemours was a doddering old man of eighty-odd, senile and practically irresponsible, whom it would be ridiculous to put behind the bars. He was actually fifty-five and vigorous physically as well as mentally; so, although the warrant was not signed and he retained his liberty, he was never quite sure that the repu-



tation De Staël had given him wasn't worse than imprisonment.

In any case, his position was unbearable, for he was effectually gagged; and it is not difficult to believe that for Du Pont de Nemours compulsory silence was the Fate That Is Worse Than Death. So bad was it, indeed, that in 1799 he, a Frenchman, emigrated. The act is eloquent, for while many Frenchmen, from time to time, have been expelled from France for heresies, religious or political, and many others have been urgently invited to leave for the good of France, it is rare indeed for a Frenchman of the favored classes to leave when there is no Simon de Montfort behind him, nor yet a Robespierre, nor yet a detective from the *Sûreté*. Nevertheless, when he was faced with the prospect of lifelong silence, this Du Pont did.

That it was an act of desperation is clear enough, but the man was far indeed from having given way to despair. His optimism, defeated, cut up, and utterly routed in France, merely transferred its basis to America, and flourished more vigorously than ever. In a very real sense Du Pont de Nemours became an American before he set foot on the soil of the western world, for while still in France he engaged in the characteristic business of Americans for the next hundred years—he laid a bet on the increase in value of American real estate. Needless to say, he did not call it that. Our gamblers in real estate have nearly always found some other name for their operations. In this case, it was a colonization scheme. A company formed in France was to purchase a large tract in the Valley of Virginia, or Shenandoah Valley. The capital was to be 3,240,000 francs (at the then current rate of exchange about \$650,000, but

in purchasing power worth much more than that sum today) and the development was to take such form as circumstances might determine, although an asylum for refugees from political oppression was one of the chief aims. In 1799 Du Pont had actually in hand 241,437 francs. He had had the promise of Lafayette to contribute, but at that moment Lafayette was just out of jail and his financial affairs were so shaky that it was perfectly evident that he could not supply any important sum. He had had, in addition, another resource that looked promising in the beginning, but was in reality more fantastic than the promise of the embarrassed Lafayette. That curious genius Pierre Augustin Caron, who chose to be known as Beaumarchais, while acting as purchasing agent for the American colonies during the Revolution, had advanced about \$700,000 out of his own pocket to the colony of Virginia and held a judgment against the State, which the United States had recognized as a lawful claim. He had promised to invest a third of this in the Du Pont scheme.

Unfortunately, as it seemed, Beaumarchais had died without making any provision in his will for the investment. As a matter of fact, had Du Pont known it, this was not important. Beaumarchais had never promised cash, but only an assignment of part of his claim; and there is a vast difference between cash and a claim against the United States government, no matter how valid. Courts may issue judgments, and executive officers of the government may acknowledge them; but claims cannot be paid until Congress appropriates the money; and Congress, as many a man besides Beaumarchais has found to his cost, has usually exhibited but a languid interest in protecting the national

honor by prompt payment of private claims. Beaumarchais' claim was paid to his heirs thirty-six years after his death. By that time Du Pont de Nemours had long been dead, too, so even if the creator of Figaro had made the right kind of will, the situation would not have been bettered.

However, those were blithe and carefree days in the new republic, and Du Pont, even before he left France, had imbibed enough of the American spirit not to stand aghast at the prospect of beginning operations with materially less than ten per cent. of the necessary capital actually paid in. In August, 1799, he sailed for the New World. Fate seemed to be against the enterprise from the start. The venturer had chosen an uncomfortable, overcrowded ship of doubtful seaworthiness, commanded by a captain with ideas of navigation so original that twice he lost his way while trying to cross the Atlantic. The voyage lasted ninety days—three weeks longer than it had taken Christopher Columbus to cross the same ocean three hundred years earlier.

Nor did the troubles end with the passage. It soon became apparent that, even in 1800, no considerable part of the Shenandoah Valley could be purchased with \$60,000. Now, too, when it seemed hopelessly late, realization began to come to Du Pont that his scheme had been without a chance from the beginning simply because the colonizing spirit, which had never flamed high in the French, had almost entirely guttered out. As he expressed it, he saw now that the average Frenchman "did not want to travel, except where he could find good cooks, gay customs, and very *free* speech." The tough and restless type that had followed La Salle, Cadillac and Marquette was

no longer produced in France in large numbers. Du Pont de Nemours, even if financial considerations were disregarded, had come to America on a fool's errand.

But at just this point in his career the French *philosophe* established his claim to be considered an American of the Americans, for he exhibited the swift resourcefulness that has contributed as much as any other single factor to the creation of American business. The colonization scheme was definitely out. There was simply no market for it; but the newcomer, instead of admitting defeat and withdrawing, put himself to a swift, yet careful survey of the market to see what it did require that he could supply. It was not long before the discovery was made that there was a tremendous demand in America for one product about which a Du Pont, not Pierre-Samuel, but his son Éleuthère-Irénée, knew something. A quarter of a century earlier, when all France was excited over the promise of a New Deal, and men never doubted that this promise would be fulfilled, if only the intellect could be given free play, the great chemist, Lavoisier, had been put in charge of the manufacture of gunpowder for the nation, and he vastly improved the process of its manufacture, as he improved everything he touched. In the powder factory Éleuthère-Irénée Du Pont de Nemours had worked for awhile, ere the storm burst and the maddened nation rewarded the scientist for his services by cutting off his head. Why should not the younger Du Pont apply his technical skill in a new environment?

Give the customer what he wants! This fundamental principle of American business the Du Ponts, father and son, grasped long before the generality of their new fellow-

citizens comprehended its excellence. Éleuthère-Irénée rushed back to France to brush up his knowledge of chemistry and technology, and Pierre-Samuel converted the 241,000 francs subscribed for a real-estate deal into the capital of an industrial enterprise. A site was chosen a few miles from Philadelphia. Perhaps it was chosen hastily, but that it was chosen well there can be no doubt; for only a few miles further down the Delaware river, a century and a half later, is the heart of the gigantic industrial satrapy into which the little powder factory has grown—an organization so vast and so powerful that the very thought of it would have left both Pierre-Samuel and his son certainly stunned, and perhaps more than a little appalled.

But while the foundation of what later became E. I. Du Pont de Nemours and Company was logical, indeed, inevitable, in the eyes of the men on the ground, Pierre-Samuel was realist enough to know that it might not seem so at a distance of three thousand miles. The prototype of the American industrialist was not the man to permit a finical respect for the opinions of mere stockholders to interfere with, much less interrupt, the conduct of the business; but he conceded the point that investors who subscribed to a real estate development and found themselves owning shares in a gunpowder factory were entitled to some explanation, and obviously the man to make it was the man of words, not Éleuthère-Irénée, the man of action. Accordingly, in 1802, Pierre-Samuel Du Pont de Nemours sailed for what he expected to be a short visit to his native land. As a matter of fact, half of his life in his adopted

country was over when he set foot on shipboard, and the short visit to France was to last thirteen years.

What years they were! They covered the whole existence of the Napoleonic empire, except for the Hundred Days, which is to say, they were years in which an old world was abolished and a new one erected in its place. For it was not merely Europe, where most of the fighting took place, that was altered; the United States, between 1802 and 1815 underwent changes hardly less profound, of which the fact that it was more than doubled in size was one of minor, rather than major, significance. It was in the welter of those stormy days that the dream of an agrarian republic was scuttled and sunk, although it was twenty years before technological advances made possible the creation of an industrial empire continental in extent. Most significant of all, however, was the acquisition of power by a group of men who, as far as their conscious memories went, had always been citizens, never subjects. These were the years that made America American, and no longer a severed fragment of Europe. South America, too, although it never saw the eagles of the Emperor, was shattered by the explosion; and even Asia, although it may have heard the uproar dimly, if at all, had its fate for generations decided on the European battlefields.

Du Pont de Nemours, in the thick of it, and at a time when life in Paris was exceptionally dangerous for talkative men, made the rather astonishing record of staying out of jail for thirteen years. Perhaps he had learned discretion as his years increased; but it is easier to believe that he was willing to permit God and Napoleon to run the universe without his assistance because he had other things

to do. One immense task was a labor of something strongly resembling filial piety; he undertook to edit the papers of his old master, Turgot. Apparently he assumed this formidable labor as a public service, for not once but repeatedly it held him in France when every political and financial circumstance dictated his return to America; and it is pleasant to remember that by this toil from which he expected no personal compensation he won a reputation in the scholarly world that has kept his memory green among the learned to this day. However, he was not slothful in business. Éleuthère-Irénée was finding the position of a pioneer manufacturer in the United States no bed of roses; for several years it was touch and go with the new venture, and had it found no additional capital it might well have failed to survive. The assistance of Pierre-Samuel was urgently needed, and was supplied without stint.

The elder Du Pont was a salesman of an order of ability that entitled him to rank among the Founding Fathers of a nation of great salesmen. Perhaps the fact that he could impress Lafayette ought not to be given too much weight, because Lafayette, with all his greatness, exhibited many of the traits of the sucker; but Du Pont sold Beaumarchais, too, and that was something of an achievement, for the dramatist was himself one of the great salesmen of his age, and a man of acumen, even if he did advance the American government \$700,000. Beaumarchais was never the man to buy whatever was offered, and in this case, as it happened, he never closed the deal; but there is little reason to doubt that he was convinced and would have acted, had he lived. Yet the final, ir-

refutable proof that Du Pont was a great salesman is not this, but the fact that in 1807 he secured the signature of the newly-created Prince of Benevento to a subscription of 100,000 francs' worth of his stock. A man who could interest Talleyrand in a project that was both risky and legitimate must have been such a salesman as sales managers dream of in mellow and optimistic moods.

In the midst of his other occupations Du Pont de Nemours kept going a stream of correspondence with American friends, and especially with his friend the President of the United States. It was during this period that he wrote most of the letters published by Dr. Chinard; but he did not confine his service to the American republic to giving advice. He played an important, if studiously inconspicuous, part in the negotiations leading up to the Louisiana Purchase. Henry Adams remarks sardonically that he was commissioned by Jefferson to do nothing less than "to alarm Bonaparte and hoodwink Talleyrand," which would have been a large order indeed. But it is possible that he may have saved the negotiations from an abrupt termination in their early days when he earnestly counselled Jefferson to moderate his tone in addressing Napoleon; and after the deal was triumphantly concluded Jefferson wrote to Du Pont what was, for the undemonstrative Virginian, an enthusiastic letter of thanks for services. He said, "For myself and my country, I thank you for the aids you have given in it [the negotiation]: and I congratulate you on having lived to give those aids in a transaction replete with blessings to unborn millions of men, and which will mark the face of a portion of the globe so extensive as that which now composes the United States of America." As



late as March 11, 1803—the papers were signed on April 30—Du Pont de Nemours was active enough in the affair to cause some irritation to Livingston, the American ambassador, who made a tart comment on it in a dispatch of that date. There is, in short, no reasonable doubt that Du Pont, far from making one effort and then quitting, as Adams seems to imply, worked hard right to the end; and little more doubt that he is due an honorable share of the credit for the final success.

Nor did his services to the new country, which was becoming more and more his own country, cease with the Louisiana Purchase. Jefferson consulted him on an astonishing variety of subjects—on national defense, for one thing, especially the defense of ports and harbors, on which Du Pont supplied information so detailed and specific that Chinard thinks he might have brought down the wrath of Napoleon on his head had the letters fallen into the Emperor's hands. The fiscal policy of the new country interested him both as a business man and as an economist, but his argument for a single tax on land had little effect. It is probable, however, that Du Pont's logic strengthened Jefferson's determination to shape the policy of the country to fit it as it was, that is to say, a huge, thinly-settled agrarian nation, and not to fit a compact, industrial country, such as England already was, and the United States might become. Du Pont fought sturdily against the extension of democracy, violently opposing putting the ballot in the hands of factory workers. To do so, he declared, would be "to brew a storm, to prepare a revolution, to pave the way for the Pisistratuses, the Mariuses, the Caesars, who represent themselves as more

democratic than they really are and than is just and reasonable, in order to become tyrants, to violate all rights, to substitute for law their arbitrary will, to offend morality and to debase humanity."

This was written in 1811 and it is interesting to note that a century and a quarter later there were men in the United States who believed that every word of it had been justified by events; for they held Franklin D. Roosevelt to be a merger of Pisistratus, Marius and Caesar, retaining the worst features of each. Yet this same Du Pont, in earlier years, had upheld with equal vigor the doctrine of the opposite party of 1936; in 1800 he had written, "There is in the United States more than anywhere else a silent common sense, a spirit of cold justice, which when it comes to casting a vote smothers the babbling of those who pretend to be clever." Probably this shift in attitude is not attributable to anything that happened in America, but to the emergence of Napoleon Bonaparte, whose stunning career caused many men to change their minds about many things.

But after the lapse of a hundred and thirty years one letter of Du Pont de Nemours stands out, not because of what it says, but because he said it. In 1812 he wrote to Jefferson expressing his view of the division of labor, which is the foundation of the modern industrial system. He was against it. He said:

"One must admit that this perfection of industry, this manner to earn and deserve a salary, is a very valuable thing, but at the same time, one must remember that it is compensated by the misfortune of creating a class of men weak, unhealthy, condemned to become machines by

operating other machines, constantly exposed to misery every time there is a war. France has already too many of these people; England has far too many of them. I bewail the fact that Americans are dragged by political circumstances into turning their capital and industries toward enterprises of the sort, which do not create wealth, but permit the acquisition of wealth and make it possible for a few capitalists to get hold of it, with the sad consequence that we have destitute people whom one can help, whose infirmities can be relieved by savings banks, but to whom we cannot procure as much intelligence, health, comfort, or morality and happiness as to a land owner, a farmer or a scientist. That class of people who work in factories where work is divided as much as possible, do not contribute any happiness, nor any power and constitute an evil for a nation. They are unable to oppose any resistance to conquerors. It is because of them and often through them that tyrants dictate laws."

From the founder of the Du Pont industrial empire, this is delicious enough to make it one of the choicest bits of irony in American history.

It is likely, however, that Du Pont de Nemours himself regarded as his most important service to the United States the elaborate scheme of public education which he prepared for his friend Jefferson. When Jefferson was meditating the establishment of the University of Virginia he asked for suggestions from almost every man of his acquaintance whose intellectual ability he had cause to respect. Most of these men responded with letters and some with long memoranda, but Du Pont de Nemours wrote a book. He brushed aside Jefferson's notion of a university,

only, and wrote on public education as he thought it should be managed in a democracy. It was an interesting scheme, the heart of which was a constant process of sifting, from the primary grades to the university, with the idea of preventing any waste of the State's resources on attempts to educate the ineducable. It was not, however, what Jefferson wanted at the time, although it may have had some influence on the final form of the scheme for the University of Virginia. Still, the American thought it valuable enough to be presented to the people of this country and he recommended not only its translation, but suggested a translator, young Gilmer. But when a translation at last appeared, more than a hundred years later, the American public school system was already established.

Du Pont de Nemours loathed the military despotism of Napoleon, yet he contrived to live under it; but when the Bourbon restoration came he found that the change was not from tyranny to freedom, but merely from a comparatively intelligent tyranny to an almost fabulously stupid one. It was not long before he found the political police regarding him with an interest that was far less flattering than sinister; and he soon realized that the prison gates were ahead. Once more he took flight from a reactionary government as he had fled fifteen years before from a radical one, and in 1815 he returned to America, this time definitely. By now the gunpowder business was flourishing—the War of 1812 had had a good deal to do with that—and his life of Turgot with his edition of the great minister's papers was finished. There was nothing to hold him in France except the ill health of his wife, and it was his hope that she would soon improve enough to

rejoin him. The hope was never fulfilled. Two years later, in 1817, he was preparing to make another voyage to France, hoping to escape the police long enough to collect Madame Du Pont and bring her back; but shortly before the date of his departure a brush fire broke out in the vicinity of the factory. Such an event in the neighborhood of a gunpowder factory was, of course, an appalling menace, demanding the active services of every available human being. Even the man of seventy-eight rushed out to take part—probably no one could have stopped him—and did too much. Over-exertion brought on a collapse that proved fatal.

Yet it is easy to believe that it is just the way that Pierre-Samuel Du Pont de Nemours would have preferred to die, had he been given his choice. Death found him in the thick of things, fighting sturdily against a danger that threatened both property and human life. It was there, in the thick of the fight, that he had chosen to spend his long life; why doubt that there he would have chosen to die?

In its issue of August 15, 1817, *Niles Weekly Register*, of Baltimore, began an obituary notice with the words, "Dupont de Nemours *clarum et venerabile nomen* is no more." Rarely, if ever, was Editor Hezekiah Niles more mistaken. The name of Du Pont has not vanished from the memory of Americans. Since 1817 an admiral has borne it, and a Senator, but it would be ridiculous to attribute its preservation solely to them; it has survived mainly because of its association with precisely the sort of industrial empire that old Pierre-Samuel, the theorist, regarded with holy horror. The existence of that empire is possible because the United States rejected the doctrine

of Physiocracy and went in precisely the direction that the Physiocrat hoped it would not take. To do him and his descendants justice, the industrial satrapy of the Du Ponts has not precipitated upon the United States all the evils that he predicted; as such economic giants go, it has been relatively decent. One would like to think—and certainly there is no proof to the contrary—that this may be due, in some measure, to the character of the founder of the house. Perhaps sometimes the virtues, as well as the sins, of the fathers may be visited upon the children, even to the third and fourth generations.

The fact remains, however, that the striking characteristic of Pierre-Samuel Du Pont's career, viewed in the light of our own times, is its irony. Dr. Chinard, the student of Du Pont, has written a book in which he argues that the first of the typical Americans, the go-getters, the believers in progress and the perfectibility of mankind through reason, was Thomas Jefferson; but it may be argued with some plausibility that the first of the true Americans was this Frenchman, four years older than Jefferson. The reformed flute-maker, John Jacob Astor, is not in this category, for his was business genius, uncomplicated by the wide-ranging intellectual interests of Du Pont de Nemours and Jefferson.

The history of the United States is full of charming ironies, but surely there are few that surpass the fact that one of our mightiest industrial organizations was founded by this man. For he was, in the first place, a dreamer and visionary. In the second place, he was an everlasting talker, bubbling over with ideas which had to find expression or choke him. In the third place, he was a scatter-brain, in-

terested in everything, darting from one project to another, always with too many irons in the fire, always spending time and energy on matters with which he was not concerned. In the fourth place, he was a subversive agitator, helping to overthrow a reactionary government by force and violence, then jailed by the radical government that followed, escaping by the narrowest of margins from suffering the same fate at the hands of a conservative government, a malcontent under the imperial government and, as he believed, actually wanted by the police of a monarchical government at the time of his death.

Yet *clarum et venerabile nomen* was the verdict of a conservative American editor upon him when he died. "There was a childlike harmlessness in his deportment, with something so dignified and imposing that it was not easy to behold him without a mixed and most pleasant feeling of familiarity and respect," said Niles. "The grave or the gay—old age or youth—the most learned and the least wise, were equally interested by his conversation and demeanor; bearing irresistible evidence of the strength of his talents and the goodness of his heart."

Famous and venerable—and why not? For in the last analysis he was a man of courage, a man of learning, a man of honor, and a man of ideas. "My friend," he wrote to Jefferson, "we are but snails, and we have to climb the Cordillera." Times change, says the old maxim, and we change with them; but times have not changed so much that this expression is out of date. If Du Pont de Nemours could know of the tremendous responsibilities that rest upon the United States today, if he could know how much of wisdom, of strength, of resolution, and of patience will be

required of American citizens in the years that lie ahead, would he change his opinion? Hardly; we are still but snails and the summit of our Cordillera still seems infinitely high and far away. So much is unchanged; but one wonders if we still have the spirit with which this old American faced a comparable situation. For his next words crack like rifle shots. He wrote, "By God! We must climb!"

And here, if you please, is the latest irony. Here is, for Americans, a call to be indomitable, an incitement to invincibility, a spur to greatness; and it was given to us by France.



*The Changelings*

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MR. TALLEYRAND, during his exile in Philadelphia, then the national capital, passed by the house of the American Secretary of the Treasury late one night and observed a light burning in the study where the Secretary, having finished his official duties for the day, was slaving over the papers of a private client. Mr. Talleyrand went his way, filled with wonder touched with contempt. "I have seen a man who made the fortune of a nation laboring all night to support his family!" he said later.

It was not a sight of which a thoroughgoing political realist could approve. Alexander Hamilton had handled millions of public funds under an accounting system largely of his own devising; therefore he had no excuse, in Mr. Talleyrand's opinion, for remaining poor. Years afterward Mr. Talleyrand declared that of the three greatest men he had ever known, Napoleon, Fox and Hamilton, he would rate Hamilton first; but this was in spite of, rather than because of, the American's failure to establish his own fortune by abstracting a reasonable quota from the government money that passed through his hands. In Mr. Talleyrand's opinion, this would not have been stealing,

but the collection of a just debt from a rascally debtor; and Hamilton's failure to exact an adequate fee for his services in restoring order to the national finances Mr. Talleyrand regarded with no admiration whatever. Nations, his experience taught him, never voluntarily pay for the services rendered them, so a man who is in position to collect his own fee is not only justified in so doing, but is guilty of weakness or folly if he omits collection.

Now there is without doubt some support for the theory that Talleyrand was one of the greatest rascals that ever cheated the gallows of its rightful prey; without doubt, his own dealings with public funds were scandalous, even when measured by the easy morality of his own generation; but as touching the quality of a government as a debtor, his view was that of a clear-eyed realist. The United States government may be as good as any, in that respect, and is perhaps better than most; but the record of the United States in the matter of payment of its just debts is not one in which an honest man can take pride.

Reference was made earlier to the case of Beaumarchais, the French dramatist, who advanced the struggling colonies 140,000 pounds out of his own pocket at the moment of their greatest need. There was never any real question as to the justice of the claim. The courts of the State of Virginia upheld it. The courts of the United States upheld it. Successive Presidents and successive Secretaries of the Treasury acknowledged it. But it could not be paid until Congress appropriated the money, and Congress regarded the payment of money to a foreigner as a matter to be attended to at its own sovereign pleasure. The outcome

was that the unfortunate Beaumarchais had been dead thirty-six years when that debt was paid.

So it has gone ever since. This unpleasant characteristic of our government is not simply a manifestation of xenophobia. Natives, including some of the most distinguished, have suffered from it as well as foreigners. During the War of 1812, for instance, General Andrew Jackson was suddenly confronted with an order to dismiss his army on the spot, without providing the men with transportation back to their homes, some fifteen hundred miles away. As it was the dead of winter, to obey that order would have been to condemn an unknown number of brave and loyal men to death by starvation. General Jackson knew it, and he also knew, or inferred, that the order had been issued in ignorance of the fact that he had moved so far. Therefore he disobeyed it. He was a wealthy man, and by mortgaging everything he had in the world he managed to secure food and transportation for the troops, whom he brought home and then dismissed.

The wisdom of his action was acknowledged in Washington, but was the bill paid promptly and willingly? Not at all. Congress dawdled and dallied until the General's creditors, to protect themselves, had to start proceedings against him. Jackson was saved from financial ruin only by a piece of political blackmail. One of his friends, Thomas Hart Benton, appeared in Washington at the critical moment to point out to the Administration that Jackson was the most popular man west of the Appalachians, and that if he were driven into bankruptcy by the dilatoriness of the Administration, what the voters would do to the Administration in the pending election would be

terrific. After that interesting suggestion, the bill to reimburse the General for his expenditures was passed like a shot.

The financial morality of the government, in short, as far as it concerns the payment of just claims, is neither higher nor lower than the financial morality of the politicians in Congress, and of the bureaucrats in various administrative offices. Its ordinary level is measured by the fact that to this day contractors who are accustomed to doing business with the government invariably protect themselves on a government contract by measures much more extensive and detailed than they would consider necessary in dealing with a fairly reputable private firm.

Mr. Talleyrand's low opinion of the financial integrity of governments was, although he was a cynic, the outcome, not of his cynicism, but of his experience. In the case of Alexander Hamilton, however, the just claim was not for money advanced, but for services rendered. It was in making no distinction between the two sorts of claims that the cynicism of Talleyrand entered. It is true that governments never reward their great servants with anything like adequate salaries, but it is not true that they go unpaid. The United States, for instance, to this day is paying Alexander Hamilton, although not in coin that a cynic values. The gratitude, the admiration, the honor amounting to reverence, of successive generations of patriotic men, are of small value to a cynic, since he sets small value on his fellow-men.

As a matter of fact, no one in recent years has seriously contended that Hamilton was a realist in the sense that Talleyrand was. All recent students concede that he be-

lieved in the unrealistic concept of honor—indeed, how can any rational man deny it, in view of the fact that he actually went to his death to defend that abstraction? The accepted view of Hamilton seems to be that he was a realist, not in comparison with Talleyrand, but in comparison with his great opponent in this country, Thomas Jefferson. The argument advanced to support this theory is simple but, if true, conclusive. It is that Hamilton's theories worked and Jefferson's didn't—or, more precisely, that the country followed the course of development predicted by Hamilton, rather than that predicted by Jefferson.

Partisan prejudice long ago subsided sufficiently to permit historians of any capacity to perceive that both men were essential. Even writers with a distinct Federalist bias have for many years granted the enormous size of Jefferson's contribution to the making of the nation, and no Jeffersonian who is taken seriously hesitates to admit that without Hamilton the republic probably would have collapsed before its history was well begun. The process of building up one man by attempting to tear down the other was abandoned long ago by sensible students; for the reputation of each is too well supported by incontestable fact to permit any hope for the success of sapping and mining operations.

It must be borne in mind, however, that this truth was never apparent to the men themselves. Hamilton, dying early, while the heat of the contest was still intense, perhaps had no chance to formulate a clear judgment; but it is a sardonic commentary on the value of contemporary estimates that Jefferson, at eighty-one, still lacked any

clear comprehension of the significance of Hamilton's contribution. He died believing that the net result of Hamilton's work was to set up a tendency toward disruption and destruction.

Jefferson, however, died in 1826 and there is no lack of reason to assert that in 1826 the pull of the Hamiltonian philosophy was in the direction of disruption and destruction. It was the Hamiltonian philosophy that was drawing the country toward the Tariff of Abominations, which all but precipitated civil war less than ten years after Jefferson's death. Jefferson understood this clearly. He was not deceived by words. He knew that the concentration of legal authority in Washington, under the conditions then prevailing, would end by creating, not a strong government, but a weak one, because the concentration would set up internal stresses that the fabric of the country could not stand. In 1861 he was proved to be right.

Yet this clear-eyed man, after dominating the political thinking of the country for half a century, gradually faded, gradually acquired the reputation of an impractical idealist whose intelligence, although undeniably powerful, did not save him from falling under the spell of dreamy fantasies. For three-quarters of the last century it has been accepted almost as axiomatic that the Virginian was a visionary and the Jamaican a realist—that the hopeful Jefferson was of the poetic temperament as contrasted with the hard-headed, unsentimental Hamilton, who represented the peasant type. Perhaps they were, if you choose, poet and peasant, but one of the ironies of American history is that their roles have been reversed by events and the hard-headed realist is

held up as the dreamer, while the poet is reputed to be the materialist.

Only one of Jefferson's countless biographers, Chinard, seems to have understood this clearly, although Nock certainly perceived it in part. As far as I know, none of Hamilton's biographers has touched it at all.

Yet, in the case of Jefferson, strong evidence, if not conclusive proof, of this theory can be summed up in a single word—Monticello. It is, perhaps, remotely possible, but it is certainly far from probable that a genuinely poetic temperament would or could have produced that amazing palace of gadgets. The architecture, to be sure, is far from trivial; the grace and serenity of its exterior were created by a philosopher, not by a tinker. But Jefferson was a great man. The argument is not that his intelligence was small, for any such suggestion would be fatuous, but that his temperament was essentially prosaic. This argument is sustained by an examination of the house he built.

Jefferson was genuinely interested in the spaciousness of life; the territory his mind traversed was bounded only by the limits of human thought, and to have his attention diverted from the cosmic to the small necessities of daily living irked him. It irks a poet, too, but a poet rarely, if ever, does anything about it. Jefferson did. He proceeded by direct and highly practical means to eliminate as far as he could the distractions that easily interrupt a train of thought. By means of a pointer on a spindle brought through the roof of his porch from a weathervane above he was enabled to tell, by glancing at the ceiling, the direction of the wind. Within arm's reach of his chair in the dining room was a dumb-waiter just large enough to bring

up one bottle of wine from the cellar. When the discussion around the mahogany was lively and interesting, he could refill the gentlemen's glasses without the intrusion of a servant, and its inevitable interruption of the talk. The famous bed in the wall, from which he was able to arise, either in his library or in his dressing-room, was a startlingly practical solution of a genuine problem. The "unintended benefit to the bureaucracies of all civilized lands," the swivel chair, undoubtedly was intended to enable Mr. Jefferson, when writing at his desk, to turn and extract a volume from a book-case behind him with the smallest possible interruption of the progression of his ideas. The place is filled with a practical man's highly practical devices for eliminating small nuisances; and if there is anything characteristic of the poetic temperament, that thing is its incapacity to deal with the trivial disturbances of ordinary life.

When we turn to Hamilton, however, the evidence of his possession of the opposite temperament is nowhere so neatly collected. As a young man he perpetrated some pretty bad verse, but he was not a versifier after he had reached maturity. He began life in a merchant's counting-house, he attained fame as a fiscal expert; and the ability to keep exact accounts, developing into an ability to balance a national budget, is not commonly accounted among proofs that the man possessing it has been touched with the divine afflatus.

But here, again, we are dealing with a great man who played the cards that Fate dealt him with a skill and resourcefulness that only a great man could command. To



point out that Hamilton was fundamentally romantic is not at all to suggest that he was

A greenery-yallery, Grosvenor Gallery,  
Foot-in-the-grave young man,

which would be as silly as to suggest that Jefferson, the gadget-maker, was nothing but a maker of gadgets. Men of the first rank do the work that is required of them in first-rate fashion, regardless of their temperamental preferences; the capacity to master themselves is one of the marks by which we recognize their greatness. The fact that Hamilton, preferring to be a lieutenant-general, yet made a great Secretary of the Treasury, is more to his credit than would have been an equally fine record based upon a passion for ledgers and accounts.

Men of first-rate ability can never be labeled neatly and thrust into pigeon-holes, for the man of extraordinary talents invariably has a touch of universality, a mentality with many facets. Everyone knows that, but nobody applies it; so it is needful to point out that the suggestion that Jefferson was essentially prosaic and practical is not a denial that he indulged in occasional flights of fancy, nor is the suggestion that Hamilton was romantic a denial that he was capable, when he deemed it necessary, of trudging indefinitely with his feet very flatly on the ground. The emotional natures of the two men do not affect the work they did in the world, nor the influence that each wielded upon the development of the republic; but a misconception of a man's emotional nature blurs and distorts the picture that later generations have of him. It makes it more difficult, if not, indeed, impossible for us to understand him, and so makes the story of his life duller.

But if there is anything in the theory that Alexander Hamilton was the impractical idealist and Thomas Jefferson the clear-eyed realist, there must be some reason for the prevailing opinion that the reverse is the truth. There is an explanation but until it is itself explained it is more confusing than the original assertion. The explanation is that from the standpoint of the last century the popular impression is the true one. The test of an impractical idealist is that his ideas, when applied in practice, do not work out; but Hamilton's did. The realist is the man whose notions stand the test of translation into practice; a good many of Jefferson's have not done so. Where, then, is there an excuse for saying that the man whose advice turned out to be sound was the dreamer, and his opponent the practical man of affairs?

The excuse lies in the fact that these results were brought about by factors that did not exist when the two men died and that could not reasonably have been foreseen by them. The places of Jefferson and Hamilton were switched by two other men who, as far as the material is concerned, were more truly the founders of the existing nation than Washington and his colleagues. These two were not statesmen, and one of them was not even an American, but between them they eliminated the republic of the early days and substituted for it another and quite different country. They were George Stephenson and Samuel Finley Breese Morse, inventors, respectively, of the locomotive and the electric telegraph.

This suggestion clashes with the view of many recent students of American government. Mr. Simeon Strunsky, to mention a late example, found in his survey of Revolu-

tionary America a remarkable homogeneity of opinion from Massachusetts to Georgia. The differences between the sections were superficial, almost always explainable by climatic or topographical differences. In their essential ideas, in their aspirations, in their manner of thinking, all Americans at that time were remarkably alike.

For this reason Mr. Strunsky is inclined to deprecate the importance of technological changes in changing the nature of the republic. It was already a unit before these things were introduced, so why credit them with unifying it? Why assume that they made any essential change in its development? Above all, why assume that they invalidated the political philosophy of Thomas Jefferson?

The answer is that Mr. Strunsky examined the country as it was in 1775. His conclusions, as they relate to that period, are sound enough. But if he had made his examination in 1820, he would have discovered no such unity. By that time the "fire-bell in the night" had begun to clang, and not only were manners and customs sharply differentiated, but men's basic conceptions of the republic and what it stood for were widely divergent. New England had already made a serious threat to return to old England; and when the country of John and Samuel Adams was almost persuaded that the Revolution had been a mistake, it is idle to contend that there was any real unity left. Some echoes of the Hartford Convention still lingered, even in 1820; and by that time the profound discontent of the South had begun to give anxiety to every thoughtful national leader.

Yet the development of political ideas during those forty-five years was perfectly logical and predictable by

anyone who accepted the facts as they existed in 1775 and based his reasoning upon them. This is the mental procedure of a realist. It was the procedure of Jefferson. Taking the facts, and nothing but the facts; taking the rate of change as it had proceeded between 1607 and the Revolution and assuming—as he had every right to assume—that it would continue at something in the order of the same rate; he worked out a prophecy of the development of the country that events fulfilled with remarkable precision for more than a generation. He realized that the trend toward centralization was bound to be opposed by the development of particularist interests, and his calculations convinced him that if both trends continued unchecked, stresses would develop that would rend the country.

All this was logical and accurate. The trends did continue, the stresses did develop, and the country was rent. Nevertheless, Jefferson, although an admirable logician, was a false prophet, for the country survives. Yet the error was not in his logic. The error was in that inescapable, irremovable factor that every logician faces when he assumes to deal with human beings. He may predict the movements of a planet or of an electron for a thousand years with almost absolute accuracy. He may predict the development of fruit-flies, or of guinea-pigs through many generations with a factor of error of negligible proportions. But the moment humanity enters the equation, mathematical calculation loses its authority; in the presence of this incalculable element, the realistic approach may be anything but real. Long ago Calverley spoke the last word on the scientific approach with reference to nicotine; after noting

How one (or two at most)  
Drops make a cat a ghost—  
Useless, except to roast—  
Doctors have said it,

he proceeded to the summation of wisdom respecting the application of scientific calculation to human affairs—

We're not as tabbies are.

This great truth Thomas Jefferson perhaps never apprehended, or, if he suspected it, he knew of no way to apply it to the solution of his problem.

At the time he was writing his *Notes on Virginia* Jefferson assumed that the conquest of the continent would require from four to five hundred years, holding that we should reach the banks of the Mississippi in two centuries. It was a bold assumption, since in the preceding hundred and seventy-five years civilization had marched only about two hundred and fifty miles back from the Atlantic coast. Jefferson's estimate was based on the assumption that the march would be speeded up greatly—in twice the time he expected the conquest to proceed more than ten times as far. This was certainly making a liberal allowance for technological progress. Hamilton probably thought it too liberal; it is unbelievable that any rational man thought it scant. But the thing was done in a single century; and two-thirds of it was done in the half-century following the introduction of the railroad. Any such terrific displacement of the temporal element on which it is based must necessarily have a profound effect upon a political philosophy, probably invalidating it, in large measure.

The Hamiltonian philosophy of a strong central gov-

ernment, supported primarily by "the rich and well-born" necessarily rested upon two bases. One was the permanence of a substantial identity of interest among the rich and well-born; the other was that means of physical control would proceed at least abreast of territorial expansion. If the aristocracy were to be divided, then the chief support of a Hamiltonian government must be split. If means of control were to fall behind territorial expansion, then a strong central government would be a physical impossibility. Without these bases, the theory would have been insane. Hamilton was no madman, hence he must have assumed their solidity.

Jefferson could not assume anything of the kind, hence to him the Hamiltonian scheme seemed fantastic to the verge of madness. To Jefferson it was perfectly apparent that, as the development of the country proceeded, a conflict among the commercial, financial, industrial and agricultural interests was inevitable. The rich and well-born were bound to fight among themselves; therefore, all democratic theory aside, to base support of the government on an identity of interest that was only apparent, and that for no long time, seemed to him hopeless. He was a traveler, too, not only here but in Europe. Abroad he had observed how difficult it was for a central government to maintain control over compact countries with excellent transportation facilities; and he realized how immensely more difficult it would be to maintain it over a continental domain practically without roads. In fact, he believed it to be impossible to exercise anything like intimate control over so vast an area, and he heartily disliked attempts to perform the impossible. So do all intensely practical men. On the

basis of the facts before him, Jefferson was entirely right. He was still alive, and Hamilton had been dead less than fifteen years when the country was riven asunder. By 1820 the rich and well-born were fighting furiously among themselves, and the patched-up truce of the Missouri Compromise was a confession of the central government's impotence to impose unity upon so vast and diverse a domain. Hamilton's two basic assumptions had both proved the insubstantial dreams of an impractical idealist, and it is small wonder that to the practical man the news of these events was "like a fire-bell in the night."

But the ironical gods were ready to take a hand. Five years before the Missouri Compromise, the War Department at Washington had so little control over an army at New Orleans, which is to say distant about as far as Warsaw is from Paris that it could not restrain that army from fighting a battle after peace had been made; forty years after the Compromise it was perfectly feasible for Washington to synchronize the blows of an army operating in the same territory with those of another army operating almost within sight of the Capitol dome. The possibility of effective control which Hamilton had assumed had actually come into existence, so one of his assumptions was established, after all. Again, within that period the industrial interest had advanced so far as to overshadow the agricultural and to contest the supremacy of the commercial, while the agile financial interest was already allied with it, rather than with agriculture. Thus there had been brought about re-establishment of a considerable degree of unity among the rich and well-born. Hamilton's second assumption was also being justified. So was created the ap-

pearance that Hamilton had been all along the practical man, and Jefferson the impractical dreamer.

I am not concerned to defend either theory of government; my point is that the misconception of the temperamental endowment of the two men has tended to make American history duller reading than it should be. Idealists, accepting Jefferson as an idealist, have been hard put to it to explain him. Materialists, agreeing that Hamilton was a materialist, have had to spin elaborate and tenuous hypotheses to account for his acts. The result is that the argument, when it is not wholly incomprehensible, can be followed only by devoting to it the closest attention. What men don't understand, they find dull reading; and it is idle to expect men to read dull books unless they are compelled to.

The nation is the poorer for this misconception, especially as it affects Alexander Hamilton. I do not mean to assert that its formal history is poorer. I am not prepared to say that our present conception of events would be radically modified by a modification of our conception of Hamilton. I am inclined to think it would not. There is plenty of diversity of opinion as regards the significance of events, and there is no reason to suppose that that diversity would be eliminated, or very much reduced by the adoption of a different attitude toward the man who started the series of events. What men wish to do, and what they intend to do frequently has little relation to what they actually accomplish in the world. It is the historians' business to record the event and its significance, if he can determine it. It is the business of the biographer to consider the man's attitude as carefully as his acts. Not the science



of history, but the art of biography is the poorer for lack of an adequate interpretation of Hamilton as a poet.

In his recent study of the man Mr. David Loth came close to supplying this lack. This is not to say that Loth's book is the best biography of Hamilton, for it is too sketchy to attain that rank. But its quality is indicated by the sub-title, "Portrait of a Prodigy." Had Mr. Loth shifted his ground but slightly, he might have made it, "Portrait of a Poet," and thereby given us a more revealing account of the man than any now in print. As it is, he avoids the fallacy of attempting what may be termed a mechanistic interpretation of Hamilton. He is aware that there is much in this life, including many of its most highly significant phases, not susceptible of explanation in terms of formal logic and statistical analyses; therefore his book acquires an interest altogether out of proportion to its weight as historical scholarship.

Some attention has been paid to Hamilton's career as the earliest example of the American success story. John Adams' brutal sneer at "the bastard brat of a Scots peddler" made it inevitable that the man's friends should emphasize the wonder of his rise from obscurity to the pinnacle of fame; but there is a subtler and far more moving story in this life than anything ever imagined by Horatio Alger, Jr.

The biographers have paid curiously little attention to the fact that Alexander Hamilton was born and lived to the age of sixteen on an island. His was a narrow world which tends, as every psychologist understands, to produce either men whose eyes are forever on the margin of the land, or men whose eyes are forever on the horizon—insular men, or rovers, the Nine Tailors of Tooley Street, or Raleigh.

Hamilton, needless to say, was one of those whose eyes were lifted.

Surely, there is nothing fantastic in the assumption that his fancy ranged, like that of another islander, Corsican Bonaparte, far beyond the line where sky met sea, and painted prodigious visions. Indeed, we have his word for it. The letters of the young Hamilton to his compeers ought not to be taken too seriously; but there is corroborative evidence that he was describing more than the vagrant dream of youth when, at the age of twelve, he wrote his friend, Neddy Stevens, "My ambition is prevalent, so that I condemn the groveling condition of a clerk or the like, to which my fortune condemns me, and would willingly risk my life, though not my character, to exalt my station . . . I mean to prepare the way for futurity."

Thirty-five years later he was still preparing the way for futurity when, on a summer morning, he climbed to a ledge of the cliff at Weehawken and confronted a venomous little man with a pistol. Nothing would have persuaded Hamilton to go through with that grisly farce except the fear that if he failed, he would lose his influence in the future; and the foundation of all his plans was his power to command the respect of men. So he went to his death by way of preparing to live.

From a groveling condition to exalt his station—at twelve Jefferson might have expressed a similar ambition, but not at twice twelve. The Virginian, of course, had the enormous advantages of birth and fortune. His station did not urgently demand exaltation; but John of Austria, Charles XII., of Sweden, and Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus, known as Nero, are proof that rank and fortune are not enough to

extinguish the romantic temperament. It was not his position, but something in the structure of the man himself that rendered Jefferson incapable of being moved by such terms as "groveling condition" and "exalted station." He examined men in the cold, clear light of day, without regard for condition or station; and he saw them as they were, not as they might be.

It is true that Jefferson wrote, "Cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens. They are the most vigorous, the most independent, the most virtuous, and they are tied to their country, and wedded to its liberty and interests, by the most lasting bonds . . . I consider the class of artificers as the panders of vice, and the instruments by which the liberties of a country are generally overturned." That seems to be a fairly romantic view of the farmer; but it was written in 1785, which was a long time ago, and it seems probable that at that time there was more evidence to support it than there was to controvert it. The declaration as to artificers, too, at this time seems more like the heartfelt expression of a member of the National Association of Manufacturers regarding the CIO than the considered opinion of a statesman; but factory workers, too, have changed much in a hundred and fifty years. More than that, it is conceivable that a Virginia gentleman of 1940, remembering that the strength of Lenin lay in the cities, and the strength of Mussolini lay in the cities, and the strength of Hitler lay in the cities, would if he told his inmost thoughts, say that "panders of vice and the instruments by which the liberties of a country are generally overturned" is all too mild a characterization of a city proletariat.

The passionate Hamilton, on the contrary, viewed the world with anything but unemotional curiosity. "Your people, sir, is a great beast!" is merely an unusually strong statement of his characteristic attitude. He was committed to the romantic conception that there is an aristocracy of brains and character that is more or less self-perpetuating. His talk of the few and the many nowhere takes into consideration the truth that while there is, in fact, an aristocracy of brains and character in every nation, it is permanent only in the sense that sea-foam is ever-present because, while it is always dissolving, it is always being renewed from below.

The massive proof of Jefferson's impractical idealism is frequently held to be his optimistic belief in the fundamental decency of the average man. But Hamilton clung persistently to an even more startlingly romantic theory—apparently, in spite of a long career in business, law and politics, he never got rid of the idea that the rich are intelligent. Again and again he urged the policy of making it to the interest of the rich to support the government, thereby apparently believing that their support would be rendered inevitable. He ignored the fact that, to make this come true, the rich must first have the wit to understand their own interest. It is true that this was a century and a half before Thyssen financed Hitler's campaign in Germany and the Dies Committee uncovered the contributions that rich Americans have made to Fascist organizations in this country; but even so Hamilton had plenty of evidence that throughout history the incapacity of the rich to understand where their real interest lies has been their undoing.

It may be argued that this persistent belief in the exist-

ence of a superior class was a psychological necessity for a man of Hamilton's obscure origin. The poor and nameless boy had made prodigious efforts, had fought long and bitterly, to batter down the obstacles that stood between him and a place in the favored class; therefore for him to admit that the class itself was a figment of imagination would have been, perhaps, intolerable. It would have left him in the position of the burglars who break into Heaven in Dunsany's play. After long toil they force the lock of the golden gate and swing it open—to discover, on the other side, nothing but stars and the void. It is arguable that Hamilton had to believe in class and caste, on pain of invalidating his own life's effort.

But it is difficult to see how his origin or the circumstances of his early life forced him to preserve to the end his rather adolescent delight in military glory. His wrath against John Adams when that honest, but unromantic patriot broke up the war with France in which Hamilton had expected to shine had important political effects; and all his life Hamilton felt a sense of frustration because fate had not permitted him to imitate the exploits of a Marlborough.

Perhaps a partial explanation of this phase of his character is to be found in the fact that he was small and handsome. It is plain to the dullest that a man's inches neither make nor prevent his greatness, but it is by no means so clear that they have no influence upon the quality of his greatness. When one thinks of eminent Americans of unusual stature—the six-footers, Washington, Jefferson, the second Roosevelt; the long fence-rail type, Andrew Jackson, Abraham Lincoln, Woodrow Wilson;

and then of the little men, John Adams, Madison, Hamilton, Burr, Stephen A. Douglas, Alexander H. Stephens and so on to Carter Glass and Fiorello LaGuardia—the temptation is strong to declare roundly that there are some moral qualities that seem to be denied to small men. Certainly the small men most prominent in our history have not been distinguished for geniality, patience, or humor.

When a man is not only small, but handsome, as well, his difficulties are increased. He has not only the serious problem of preventing infringement upon his personal dignity, which all small men face, but in addition that of justifying the admiration of the fair. It is hard to escape the conclusion that the quarrel between Hamilton and Burr was inflamed and envenomed by the fact that they were both small and handsome, both favorites of the ladies, both sensitive on the point of physical courage. They would have quarreled in any case. Their political ideas were bound to come into violent collision, and each was under the necessity of attempting to thwart the ambition of the other. But if each had had the seventy-four inches and the powerful frame of George Washington it is rather hard to believe that they would have faced each other with pistols. It is true, of course, that Andrew Jackson was both tall and given to dueling; but Jackson was a frontiersman, who spent most of his life in a country where a man's mere survival frequently depended less upon his intellectual and moral qualities than upon his ability to draw swiftly and shoot straight. Burr and Hamilton lived in a far more orderly environment.

Brooding upon any sort of disqualification, moral or physical, certainly tends to blur somewhat a man's percep-

tion of reality. It is a strong stimulant to the development of romantic illusions. When a man wishes fervently that things were different he is disposed to imagine that they are different. Hamilton was one of the finest quill-drivers the country ever produced, and he loathed it; he burned to be the plumed knight. Johnny Inkslinger wanted to be Paul Bunyan, and regarded with contempt the miracles he worked in his own right, and that only he could perform.

The quarrel between Washington and Hamilton is a psychologist's text-book case of the explosion of a romantic temperament. Nobody believes now—in truth, nobody believed then—that the incident was actually based on a rebuke administered by the commander because the inferior officer was five minutes late for an appointment. Hamilton was a soldier, and no real soldier ever was cut to the heart by being bawled out for tardiness; he expects nothing else. The real trouble was that Washington kept Hamilton slaving at paper work when he wanted to be commanding in the field. Washington knew it, but, being a first-rate commander, it did not move him. He was aware that he could find twenty men capable of commanding a battalion acceptably before he could find one other man who was to be mentioned in the same breath with Hamilton as an adjutant. He therefore let the younger man rave up to the point where his raving touched the level of insubordination, and then he let him go. At that, he was not deceived. He knew that Hamilton's conduct, although it was of a sort that no commander could overlook, did not spring from a mutinous spirit, but from the wild desire of an ardent and romantic young man for the sort of military glory that comes from acts of personal gallantry.

One of the kindest things George Washington ever did was finally letting the boy have his way. Right at the end, when the war was practically won anyhow, he permitted Hamilton to have a command and set him to take a redoubt at Yorktown, which he did brilliantly. By comparison with the really great services he rendered, both before and after this incident, the storming of that redoubt was a petty achievement; there were a dozen men on the field who could have done it, and without question one of them would have done it had Hamilton not been there. But there is much evidence that in Hamilton's eyes it was the supreme moment of his whole life. He was prouder of leading that charge than he ever was of being Washington's great adjutant and his still greater Secretary of the Treasury.

The proof of the inextinguishable quality of Hamilton's romanticism lies in the fact that he was at this time already a veteran. Not only had he observed the operations of the army from headquarters in several hard campaigns, but as a captain of artillery he had stood in battle, and after the disasters in New York he had conducted that grimmest and most nerve-racking of military operations, a retreat under pressure of the enemy. Such ample experience is enough to take the romance out of war for all but the incurably romantic; nevertheless, at the end of it, Alexander Hamilton still yearned to charge at the head of troops. He was not merely romantic, he was deeply, basically, incurably romantic.

The argument against any such estimate of the man is, it seems to me, quite irrelevant. It is based on the facts that Hamilton was a shrewd business man, an able lawyer, and an inspired political leader, which are qualities commonly



regarded as impossible to the poetic temperament. But Lorenzo de' Medici ran the biggest bank in the world, was undisputed political boss, without holding office, of one of the most turbulent cities in the world, and at the same time was the best poet in Tuscany. William Shakespeare made a comfortable fortune in a business requiring great shrewdness, and retired with it intact. The common belief that it is impossible for a poet to keep books is superstition.

The only verses ever written by Hamilton are some pretty sad productions of his extreme youth, not conspicuously better or worse than those written by most school-boys and college youths. But surely the world has passed beyond the belief that poet and rhymester are synonymous terms. The vision that can pierce beyond the limitations of space and time, the passionate aspiration for a life larger, more spacious, nobler than the life it is given to mortals to live—these make the poet, and these Alexander Hamilton unquestionably had. He suffered the fate of most true poets in that all his brilliant worldly success was not sufficient to compensate him for the inner frustration which must be endured by any man avid to wring from life more than is in it. Nearly all his biographers have commented on the sense of bafflement and defeat apparent in Hamilton under circumstances in which most men would have been complacent. It is incomprehensible in a thorough materialist; but it is precisely what one would expect in a man whose temperament was fundamentally romantic, although reined in by extraordinarily fine judgment.

It explains, too, why he and Jefferson were bound to misunderstand and, in a very real sense, despise each other. Each respected the other's ability, of course. Either must

have been fabulously stupid not to realize that in the other he had encountered a man of superb intellectual capacity. They were not stupid, and each repeatedly acknowledged the power that he felt in the other. But Jefferson had no comprehension of the grandeur of Hamilton's vision of the future republic, and if it had been explained to him in words of one syllable he would simply have said that the man was moonstruck. As it was, seeing that the fellow was far too shrewd to admit of any doubt as to his sanity, Jefferson could make but one inference, to wit, that he was secretly contriving a restoration of the monarchy. Jefferson sincerely believed his great rival to be traitorous, and therefore loathed him. Hamilton, on the other hand, could not understand how any man of Jefferson's incontestably great intellectual powers could fail to perceive the vision that was so plain to him. He could make but one inference, to wit, that it was willful blindness, due to a conscious preference for popularity and present power rather than for a part in the creation of the greatness that was to be. Hamilton sincerely believed his great rival to be a time-server and a cheat, and therefore loathed him.

Here is a dramatic element in our national history that has been far too much neglected. It was a tragedy in the Greek style, the catastrophe that was no one's fault, but was inherent in the nature of things. Two of the greatest Americans of their time by virtue of the very elements that made them great were doomed to collision, to mutual misunderstanding, and to a contest that, if it had done nothing else, would still have been lamentable because it deprived both of them of the marvelous companionship that each could have given the other.

The friends of Jefferson have frequently pointed out, as evidence of his magnanimity, the fact that he kept a portrait bust of Hamilton in the great hall of Monticello. But it is possible to see it as infinitely sad. It may be read as evidence that, in spite of the dust and fog of party strife, and in spite of the gulf that yawned between their temperaments, the great realist perceived something of his loss, felt vaguely that in failing to draw this man to him he had somehow missed the rarest friend he ever could have known.

The possible effect upon the course of American history of a genuine understanding between Jefferson and Hamilton naturally has fascinated speculative writers throughout the years. The usual assumption is that it would have been not powerful, only, but also beneficent. This does not necessarily follow. It takes no account of the principle of growth through struggle.

Alexander Hamilton was never afflicted with undue modesty. There is good reason to believe that when he entered Washington's Cabinet it was with the secret belief that he was destined to take over the government. It was not that he had the faintest impulse to be disloyal to Washington, but he proposed to give the President what Hamilton considered a higher loyalty than mere subservience—he proposed to give Washington sound advice and discreet guidance, to the end that the fine old country gentleman should stand before the world as a brilliant statesman. The fact that Washington was already a great, if not brilliant, statesman, Hamilton had not grasped, for in some ways he was singularly unperceptive.

This misapprehension of the real situation was a weak-

ness of large significance which, if not corrected, might have worked serious damage to Hamilton's own career, reducing heavily the value of his services to the country. But it was corrected. In the Cabinet the Secretary of the Treasury found, at first with incredulity, and throughout with amazement, that he could not get his hands on national policy, he could not really get at the Chief, because the lanky, awkward figure of the Secretary of State stood in the way. In order to control Washington, it would first be necessary to batter down Jefferson. This task he undertook blithely; but his blithe spirit soon gave way to irritation as the Virginian refused to be swept aside. Then Hamilton bent all his energies to the task, and as Jefferson still stood, immovable, Hamilton worked harder and harder, with a growing exasperation that eventually mounted, as all the world knows, to a baffled fury that made the situation impossible.

The effect of this struggle upon Hamilton himself is, of course, beyond our measurement, but it was probably one of the best things that ever happened to him. Confronted with strong, resourceful and relentless opposition, he was compelled to exercise all his talents, and who can doubt that they were strengthened by exercise?

The effect upon the national history is also a matter of debate, except in one important circumstance. In 1801, owing to the clumsy system of electoral voting, the Federalists, although defeated, found it in their power to choose between Jefferson and Aaron Burr, and it was at the urgent insistence of Hamilton that they chose Jefferson. The Federalist leader hated both men with equal intensity; but in addition to hatred, he held Burr in contempt and

Jefferson in respect. The reason for that was that he had felt the power of Jefferson's opposition in the Cabinet. Had their minds gone along together during that service, he would never have had occasion to appreciate the strength of the great Virginian, in which event it is not beyond belief that he might have been cynical enough to throw the election of 1801 to Aaron Burr. Certainly that seemed to be the preferable move from the partisan standpoint, and any party leader might have been excused for selecting it when there seemed to be no choice otherwise between the candidates presented; but Hamilton was patriot enough not to put partisan advantage ahead of the real interest of the country. If he had to choose between scoundrels, for the country's sake he would at least pick the one with brains. He therefore unhesitatingly stood for Jefferson.

On the other side, there is as much reason to believe that Thomas Jefferson was a bigger man because he had Hamilton as his opponent. Although he came to be one of the greatest of Americans, Jefferson was born with a handicap that might have ruined him, as it has ruined some other men whose intellectual capacity was perhaps as great as his. Jefferson was by nature what a later generation terms scornfully a "Munich-man." He was a natural appeaser. But in the Cabinet no appeasement was possible. Washington did not ask his Secretaries to get together, compromise their differences, and present him with the result. He asked each to present his own policy so that the President might choose no compromise, but the better of the two. Hence there was nothing to do but fight, and fight to the last ditch. Jefferson found, possibly to his own

surprise, that, if put to it, he could fight, and fight effectively. For a Munich-man it must have been an immensely valuable experience.

Incidentally, among the innumerable benefits that George Washington conferred upon his country, not the least valuable was the double achievement of taking some of the conceit out of Alexander Hamilton and making Thomas Jefferson fight. Each was a far more valuable man for the experience.

It is strange that this disposition to avoid a pitched battle should have been widely accepted as evidence that Jefferson was an impractical dreamer. It is the dreamers who fight. The genuine swash-buckler is practically always a man whose mental processes are far removed from reality. To call Jefferson's non-combativeness evidence of his impracticality, is much like saying that because in one respect he resembled Neville Chamberlain, therefore he must have been a Cyrano de Bergerac at heart. It is patently absurd.

His non-combativeness is, in fact, the strongest possible proof that there was nothing of the visionary in him. If this obvious truth has been consistently neglected for more than a century, it is because enemies of the Jeffersonian polity, in their anxiety to discredit Jefferson in every phase of his character as well as in every act of his career have chosen to interpret his lack of belligerence as cowardice. The fact that Jefferson walked serenely in the shadow of the gallows for many years, the fact that again and again he cheerfully undertook commissions that inevitably would have put a noose around his neck had his country's enemies been able to lay hands on him, the fact that none

of his contemporaries whose opinion is worth having ever thought of questioning his personal courage, all stand in the way of this charge. But the charge endures because there are so many people who are unable to understand, or at least to admit, that there may be any reason except fear for avoiding a fight.

Fear is a primary emotion, easily understood; Jefferson's disability as a warrior was a much more complex and subtle thing. It was a lack, not of courage, but of comprehension of the war-like impulse. His emotional nature, highly developed in some respects as is evidenced by his devotion to his wife, apparently included not a vestige of the fierce joy of combat. His common sense told him that war is horrible, destructive of all values, material and moral, and rarely productive of any permanent good. He was therefore forever unable to understand why men under some circumstances actually welcome it and regard it as preferable to certain forms of peace.

Yet this mental attitude ought not to be beyond the grasp of Americans, especially of the generation of Americans who are living a century and a quarter after Jefferson's death. It is precisely the attitude of every matter-of-fact realist among us, particularly big business men and research scientists. Business and science, far apart as they are in some respects, agree at least on the rigid exclusion of emotionalism from their intellectual operations. In their calculations they take account of it, of course, as they take account of temperature, velocity, quantity, and other irremovable factors. But they cannot control emotionalism, therefore they dare not employ it as one of their instruments. The axiom, "business is business" has been

accepted and adapted by science, and it marks the limitation of both. It is rarely that one finds a big business man or a first-rate scientist who is not genuinely bewildered by the fighting propensities of civilized men.

This is why neither business men nor scientists have been conspicuously successful in American public life. They are too reasonable, too logical, too much afraid to release emotion which they know they cannot control, because they cannot understand it. It is the secret of Jefferson's weakness as President of the United States. As a matter of fact he was, in many respects, a very great President; but in others he was a wretched failure, largely because he saw the situation as it existed and not through a fog of emotionalism as others saw it.

Yet, contrary to the belief of scientists and business men, to see the situation exactly as it exists is not always an advantage. In the first place, the situation may be in process of change. In the second place, the situation may be—indeed, it usually is—affected by what Bismarck called “the imponderables,” which elude logic.

Take, for example, the point at which the Jefferson administration has been most consistently, persistently, and successfully attacked—its naval policy. As a matter of fact, it was not a naval policy at all—it was a no-navy policy. Yet Jefferson embedded it so successfully in American political thinking that not until 1890 was it blasted out by Admiral Mahan with his famous book, “The Influence of Sea Power Upon History.”

This policy was based upon the much-derided “corn-field gunboats.” Jefferson advocated the building of swarms of small craft, each armed with one or two heavy



guns. This fleet could not keep the high seas, nor was it intended to do so; indeed, the larger part of it was not even to be kept in commission, which gave the wags their opportunity to assert that Jefferson proposed to keep most of his navy hauled up in corn-fields. It was founded upon the theory that the best defense is simply to repel attacks; and it is a fact that at the outbreak of the war of 1939 the United States navy was maintaining exactly this policy, to a very considerable extent. It was in possession of some 300 destroyers, of which the larger part were laid up in port, out of commission, but ready to be reconditioned and sent to sea in case of a threatened invasion. They were the modern counterpart of the corn-field gunboats.

As a matter of fact, Jefferson saw the situation as it existed in his day and dealt with it adequately. What escaped his observation—and the country's, too, until Mahan's work made them inescapable—were precisely the two factors mentioned above, first, the rate of change of the situation, and, second, an imponderable, to wit, the emotion of fear. The very basis of naval defense was already shifting from securing the coast to the destruction of the enemy's commerce; but it was nearly eighty years later that a naval officer proved it. Furthermore, the only perfect defense is the prevention of war; and one factor in preventing it is the emotion of fear. A nation that is known to have the power to strike heavily a thousand miles, or three thousand miles, from its own coasts, will not have its coasts attacked on any frivolous excuse. But fear is a tricky, unstable, highly dangerous compound; Jefferson was too distrustful of emotionalism, too thor-

oughly practical, to believe in its employment as a national policy.

But is there anything unfamiliar in this? Have we not heard the same point urged, over and over again, by practical men even after the war of 1939 began? Jefferson could have understood perfectly the reasoning of Charles A. Lindbergh, of Neville Chamberlain and, in part, at least that of Fritz Thyssen, in 1939. These men were all strong believers in facing the facts, in accepting the situation as it existed and working out a reasonable adjustment of conflicting claims. They were all stoutly opposed to what they regarded as romantic nonsense. They were practical men, but their quality as statesmen was worse than dubious.

If Jefferson, in spite of his practicality, made a statesman of the first rank, it is highly probable that one of the main reasons was his collision with a man of romantic temperament who was also a genius of the first order. The impact of Hamilton knocked Jefferson out of his library and compelled him to give some intensive study to mankind in the flesh, and not in the statistical abstract. He was a greater man for it. True, in the Virginian's long career there were other forces driving him in the same direction. The French Revolution exploded right under his nose when he was American minister to France. Before that, he had been a war-time Governor of Virginia, and Tarleton's troopers swarming over the lawns of Monticello could not be regarded exactly in the light either of a sales manager's report, or of a demonstration in differential calculus. On many occasions Jefferson had been handled roughly by an illogical and emotional world; but of all those demonstra-

tions that man is more than either an economic entity or a scientific datum, by far the most impressive was the encounter with Hamilton. All of them together go far to explain why he developed the political astuteness that raised him as a statesman, far above the level of, say, James Madison, who managed to cling to his library.

But what, after all, does it signify? Jefferson has been dead for a century and a quarter, Hamilton for nearly a century and a half. What they did is done. The effects they produced are fixtures in national history and cannot be erased. Suppose Hamilton's mentality was that of the poet and Jefferson's that of the peasant—what of it? Nothing can be done about it now.

That is not so certain. As to the influence upon events of the respective careers of the two men, one's opinion is not likely to be altered by a revision of one's estimates of their respective temperaments; but there may be a very considerable shift in the significance of the two men, not to earlier generations, but to Americans who are alive today.

The ironical fate that has reversed the relative position of Jefferson and Hamilton in the estimation of their successors has little, if any, relation to the qualities of the men themselves. It originated in events that occurred after both were dead, events which they could not have foreseen. The same sort of thing might happen to anybody, may happen to some of the men prominent in public life today. It affects us, not Hamilton and Jefferson; but it may cause us to miss, or to misinterpret, the value of the record.

This view strips Jefferson of some of the "idealism" with which he has been draped; but what he loses is only the cheaper and flimsier sort of idealism. His serene faith in democracy remain and gains weight as one perceives in him the clear-sighted, unimaginative realist. The physical conditions existing in his life-time he expected to change slowly. As a matter of fact, they changed with startling speed. At that, his prevision was justified with startling fidelity before the changes, swift as they were, had their full effect. He saw clearly that, under the physical conditions existing at the time of the Revolution, or under conditions at all resembling them, a strong central government in this country meant, not unity, but disunity. Before he died New England trembled on the brink of secession. Before he died the country actually had been divided along the line of the Missouri Compromise. Less than a generation after his death, the South actually did secede. Lesser men might blind themselves to the inevitable, but not this, the most highly prescient political philosopher America has brought forth.

But it was precisely this man, whose foreknowledge was so precise that nothing less than a revolutionary alteration in the environment in which men lived could invalidate it, who asserted flatly, and never wavered from the faith, that the people, given true information and a fair chance to be heard, are capable of providing for themselves a better government than can be provided for them by any other power.

Institutions are objective, and an alteration in the objective world means an alteration in its institutions; but habits of thought are subjective, and are affected only by sub-

jective changes. As regards American institutions, Jefferson was but an indifferent prophet—only, however, because the conditions on which he based his prophecy were themselves altered after his death. As long as the conditions remained the same, his predictions were astonishingly accurate.

No rational man seriously maintains that the last five generations have witnessed an alteration in the habits of thought of the American people even remotely comparable to the alteration in their living conditions. There is, therefore, no convincing reason to assume that Jefferson's estimate of the capacity of the people for self-government requires any such revision as his estimate of the strength of their institutions. The physical changes, in fact, as far as they impinge upon the people's habits of thought, have been in the direction of making available to more people earlier, more accurate, and more comprehensive information about their government, and should, to that extent, increase, rather than diminish, their capacity to govern themselves. In other words, the clearest, least sentimental, coolest of our political thinkers was the strongest believer in democracy. It is something worth knowing at a moment when repudiation of democracy has gone the lengths it has reached today.

Nor does it necessarily follow that Hamilton is diminished in stature by denial of his capacity to reason strictly on the basis of existing circumstances. Indeed, it would be rash to deny his capacity to do so, for he himself often denied any desire to do so. In the matter of the assumption of the State debts, for example, he was well aware that his policy, under the existing circumstances, must result in the

enrichment of countless rascals to the loss of honest men. His opinion of that sort of gain is sufficiently indicated by the fact that he touched not one dollar of it himself. He knew that the chance of sharing the spoil was drawing to his standard a Falstaff's army, "the cankers of a calm world and a long peace." He knew that the immediate result of his efforts would involve much injustice and oppression. But he cared nothing, for he felt that in making the foundations of the republic broad and strong he was conferring a benefit upon the country that would far outweigh the incidental evils that attended the work. He could not understand, as Jefferson did, that the instincts of the people were sound. He did not know the people. Such contacts as he had had with them were made in the army, or in the cities, which were then far less representative of America than they are today.

Nevertheless, not by the collation and comparison of facts, not by observation, not by any process of reasoning, but by the insight that is given to true visionaries he sensed the fact that a great destiny lay before this people could they only be united permanently. As against this vision, the palpable fact that, under the circumstances then existing, they could not possibly remain united except in a loosely bound confederation, meant nothing whatever to the visionary. The obstacles in the way of realization of his dream were time and distance, two against which man had been impotent since history began. It is unimaginable that Hamilton foresaw the technical devices by which both were to be brushed aside, but that they would be brushed aside he blithely assumed—insanely, as Jefferson thought, but accurately, as we know now.

So far, this seems to be an argument that, without Stephenson and Morse, Hamilton would indeed have been a madman. But this is not true. Every student of history knows that epoch-making inventions appear when the need of them is sufficiently great. Many men were working on the problem of applying steam to transportation when Stephenson solved it. Many were working on that of the magnetic telegraph when Morse solved it. To an occasional genius is given the power to sense the truth that lies behind logic, to pierce through the deceptive screen of facts to the greater thing that lies behind them. This is poetic imagination, which, over and over again, has proved more accurate than fact-finding, more real than realism. Hamilton had it, and his romantic dream was solidier stuff than Jefferson's sober facts.

To the impeccably logical mind, if one exists, this may be distressing. The man who believes that the world actually proceeds in orderly sequence from known cause to predictable effect—if any such incredibly mechanistic individual lives—may find a painful shock in the suggestion that intuitive perception sometimes may overleap scientific method and arrive sooner at the truth; but most of us have seen it happen frequently enough to be sure that there is nothing incredible about it.

More than that, the knowledge is valuable, if only as protective armament against the prophets of doom. When the world is convulsed by war, these prophets multiply exceedingly, and the ordinary man is put to it to withstand them; yet their leadership can direct him nowhere save into the Slough of Despond. America at this moment is full of able, honest, and learned men who, by logical

reasoning, based on irreproachable authorities, can show that inevitable ruin lies ahead, and did show it assiduously until military considerations silenced them. From a thousand fora they proclaimed the imminent collapse of the national economy; in a score of learned journals they traced the progress and forecast the continuance of the degeneration of our people, physically, morally, intellectually; in every newspaper they announced daily the cracking of this or that pillar of the state. All this they supported with incontestable facts, with graphs, charts and statistics which a plain man is utterly unable to confute. In this pandemonium it is comforting to reflect—since there is really nothing one can do about it—that perhaps if these people were as clear-sighted as Jefferson, they would be more confident of democracy; and if they were as stout-hearted as Hamilton, the greatness within them might sense and thrill to the greatness of their nation.

The sardonic fates who contrived American history have mocked the prophets ever since it began. Even the mightiest, they have turned somewhat to ridicule. Jefferson, the realist, was right when he trusted the people, and wrong when he distrusted the future; Hamilton, the idealist, was wrong when he distrusted the people, and right when he trusted the future. Therefore, men who distrust both the people and the future, although they may overwhelm us with their learning, do not impress us with their wisdom. For American history is steeped in irony—thank God!



*The Menace of Mutability*

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UNFORTUNATELY, it is not true that Mr. Martin Van Buren made himself President of the United States by the simple process of knocking at Mrs. Peggy Eaton's door.

The unsoundness of the theory is regrettable, because it was exactly the way in which a man such as Mr. Van Buren should have become President, if such a man was to become President at all; for Mr. Van Buren was something of a fraud and Mrs. Eaton was questionable. But it is an over-simplification. A complex web of political intrigues preceded Mr. Van Buren's election. Mr. Van Buren was, in fact, a sign and symbol, an expression of a certain phase of American political life, and his elevation to the Presidency may have been predestined from the foundation of the republic. If Martin Van Buren had not been chosen, someone exactly like him must have been the choice, in view of the state of politics in 1836.

But it is incontestable that the act of knocking at Mrs. Eaton's door accelerated, if it did not initiate, Mr. Van Buren's progress from the paternal tavern at Kinderhook, New York, to the White House in Washington. Mr. Van Buren had, indeed, come far before he ever encountered

Mrs. Eaton; he was already Secretary of State of the United States when he knocked at her door. But the lady herself was no laggard; starting even with Mr. Van Buren, except that in her case the paternal tavern was at Georgetown, in the District of Columbia, she had fairly kept pace with him, until now she was the wife of the Secretary of War.

Neither had attained the eminence of Cabinet rank altogether without criticism. There were those—John Quincy Adams, for example—who said that Mr. Van Buren had made his way by regularly betraying every trust reposed in him. Similarly there were those—Vice President Calhoun's wife, for example—who said that Mrs. Eaton had made her way by becoming Senator Eaton's mistress before she became Secretary Eaton's wife. But such matters are not commonly advertised by the persons best acquainted with the truth, so how did Mr. Adams and Mrs. Calhoun know? The answer is that they couldn't prove a thing!

The story would be superb if it could be added that when the Secretary of State knocked at the door the two combined forces and proceeded to a joint conquest of the world. But nothing of the sort happened. Their paths intersected briefly, only to diverge again. Soon Eaton was appointed Minister to Spain and Van Buren to England; and that was that.

Peggy Eaton is no more than a high light in the career of a man who presents one of the most striking ironies in American history. He was the almost perfect politician—not quite perfect, however, for, J. Q. Adams' opinion to the contrary notwithstanding, Van Buren was slightly

tainted with honesty. At two great crises of his career this tendency became predominant, causing him briefly to step out of character. Twice he succumbed to the temptation to pursue an honorable course, and both times the results were disastrous.

One of his biographers<sup>1</sup> has dubbed him "the American Talleyrand," but the title is questionable. It is true that Talleyrand was a great statesman; but he had the faculty of doing a wise and patriotic thing in such a way that to the world it would seem to be cheap and nasty. Talleyrand was fraudulent both ways; he could look like a statesman while acting like a crook, and he could look like a crook while acting like a statesman. He was a perfect thing of his kind, and he was unquestionably one of the most successful men who ever entered public life, in France or in any other country. Van Buren was but a pale reflection of Talleyrand. In the first place, he was not financially crooked, and, in the second place, when he acted with intellectual honesty he did it simply and directly, so that he was caught in the act.

Martin Van Buren was apparently designed by nature to be a cheap politician, and as long as he stuck to his role he remained invincible. The fact that he ever permitted himself to be inveigled into abandoning the part that he played best is a flaw in his character. It is entirely fortuitous that the two occasions on which he did abandon it were the two on which he played the part of an honest

<sup>1</sup> Holmes Alexander, whose book is probably the best study of Van Buren in existence, although Mr. Alexander is unjust to Aaron Burr, the Clintons, the Livingstons and the Kitchen Cabinet when he attempts to show that Van Buren was the inventor of dirty politics in this country. Van Buren was, at most, merely a superb practitioner of an ancient art.

man, even a great man; it is as genuinely a flaw in character for a petty man to attempt to be great, as it is for a great man to stoop to pettiness.

But when Secretary of State Van Buren knocked at Mrs. Peggy Eaton's door, he was perfectly in character. The lady to whom he was offering the assurances of his most distinguished consideration he referred to in private as "the Eaton malaria"<sup>2</sup> and he had ample reason to regard her as a pest and a plague; but circumstances were such that courteous attention to Mrs. Eaton might be made politically profitable to Mr. Van Buren, and for political profit any first-rate politician will blithely risk contact, not merely with malaria, but with leprosy, lues and the Black Death. So it was an excellent political stroke, no matter how cantingly insincere, when Van Buren called on the wife of his colleague, the Secretary of War.

Mr. Henry Clay observed the maneuverings of the Secretary of State with sardonic delight. He was not deceived for a moment. He understood exactly what Mr. Van Buren was doing, and why he was doing it. It was not the sort of thing he would care to do, but it was

<sup>2</sup> See his *Autobiography*, page 403. Note, also, Van Buren's own account (p. 344) of his discussion of Peggy Eaton with Mrs. Donelson, niece of President Jackson, and for the time mistress of the White House: "She spoke of her (Mrs. Eaton) as possessing a bad temper and a meddlesome disposition and said that the latter had been so much increased by her husband's elevation as to make her society too disagreeable to be endured. . . . For the sake of the discussion only, I agreed, after a moment's reflection, to admit that she was right in her views of Mrs. Eaton's character and disposition." Incidentally, the Van Buren *Autobiography*, issued as a public document in 1920, deserves a wider circulation than it has ever achieved; it is excellent reading and is probably the only great humorous work ever to come from the presses of the Government Printing Office.

exactly what he expected Van Buren to do. Probably he took a sort of craftsman's pleasure in it, for he was no mean politician himself and no craftsman can watch a master of his craft at work without an appreciation that is more or less pleasurable. Besides, Mr. Clay was in the happy position of being completely immunized against the Eaton malaria; it was a Democratic row, and he was a Whig. The more virulent it became, the more useful it would be to him. Why should he not rejoice?

But Mr. Clay never laughed at a more inappropriate moment. Mr. Clay was perfectly right in his estimate of Mr. Van Buren's motives and character, but Mr. Clay was nevertheless in error when he laughed. His error lay in ignoring the fact that while Mr. Van Buren was a demagogue, he was a great demagogue. In Mr. Clay's opinion there were no two orders of greatness in politics. He did not realize that demagoguery is as complex and difficult an art as statecraft—an error that has been repeated countless times by statesmen of many nations and that is still being repeated by authors of conventional text-books of civics and history. To this day, there is no adequate study of Van Buren as one of the most perfect specimens of his type. Even Mr. Alexander, who has given him most attention, is shocked by Van Buren's constant departures from the rules of conduct laid down by moralists as the correct procedure for statesmen.

Perhaps this attitude is justifiable in biographers, historians and other chroniclers, although it is hard to see why a student of a demagogue should be shocked by his demagoguery, any more than a student of cancer is shocked by its malignance. The student of cancer expects nothing

else; he would be bewildered and disturbed—in brief, shocked—only if he found a sarcoma contributing to the health and well-being of the organism it had invaded. Above all, it is unjustifiable for men who are called on to deal in real life with a demagogue to treat him lightly because his fraudulence is transparent to their eyes. With the petty variety, this course may be safe, for the petty frauds soon become transparent not merely to the shrewdest men of their time, but to everyone. Occasionally, however, there comes to the fore a political leader whose demagoguery is so perfectly adapted to the modes of thinking of the average man that it is beyond detection by him. Such a man is far from inconsiderable, for he is always intelligent and sometimes is gifted with an intellectual capacity that falls little short of genius. In this category Martin Van Buren undoubtedly belongs.

Practitioners of dirty politics no doubt are deplorable people who ought not to exist; but as a class they have some very attractive qualities. Any old newspaper man will tell you that they are always interesting, and frequently charming. A winning personality, indeed, is a necessary part of their professional equipment. I have known many political bosses and some of them were bad men; but there is hardly one with whom I would not rather spend an evening than with any bishop of my acquaintance.

Martin Van Buren was unquestionably one of the greatest of this type that the country has as yet produced. In the first place, he was free alike of the unpleasant vices and the odious virtues. He was not a lecher, a drunkard, or a gambler, except in politics; on the other hand, he was

not in the least a Puritan. He was not avaricious. He made politics pay, and pay handsomely, but there is not the slightest evidence that he ever dipped his hand into the public till except by due process of law; and what old John Kelly called "honest graft" doesn't levy an extravagant toll on public funds, nor build up extravagant fortunes.

On the positive side, his contemporaries agreed almost unanimously that he was one of the politest men ever seen in Washington. Small of stature, fastidious in his dress, suave in his deportment and keenly intelligent, he pleased the eye, soothed the emotions, and charmed the minds of all around him. He was the perfect dinner guest, enchanting alike the aristocracy of London, that faction of the Federalists known as "the high-minded," and the rank and file of Tammany Hall. Clay, Webster and Calhoun scorned him, but were helplessly unable to hate him. Even the invincible malice of John Randolph of Roanoke was almost defeated by Van Buren; the worst the Virginian could say of him was, "He rows to his object with muffled oars." John Quincy Adams himself could denounce Van Buren only as the recipient of the reward of treachery, which, from J. Q. Adams, was almost a eulogy.

All this Mr. Clay would have granted readily, but he would have granted it with good-natured contempt. All this, he would have pointed out, had no bearing on Mr. Van Buren's quality or capacity as a statesman. That was true but—and this is what Mr. Clay, with all his superb intellectual equipment, could never get through his head—the objection was irrelevant. Mr. Clay was living through one of those tremendous shifts of emphasis that

have occurred at least three times in our national history and, like nearly all who find such shifts coming upon them after their political philosophies are mature, he never fully understood what was happening. He did observe, of course, because it was thrust painfully upon his notice several times, that the qualities that had served well enough to constitute leaders of democracy in his youth were no longer sufficient; and he jumped to the conclusion, as defeated men usually do, that the fact evinced a deterioration of democracy.

Washington, Jefferson and Hamilton were republicans, but never democrats. Hamilton openly repudiated any democratic affiliation; Washington did not go that far, but he was frankly distrustful of democracy; Jefferson accepted it in principle and argued eloquently for the theory, but his conception of democracy was fantastically far removed from the ideas of his successors. It never occurred to Jefferson to doubt that while the people should rule, they should exercise their power through representatives drawn from the gentry—not indeed gentlemen by heredity, but those who had earned the title by their own demonstrated quality. Jefferson believed in an aristocracy of brains and character, not of blood; but he believed in an aristocracy.

The revolution of 1800 was the first great shift of emphasis in our political philosophy. Up to that date, the stress had been laid upon the abolition of monarchy and the trappings of monarchy, and the attainment of independence. Beyond that, the old English system had hardly been touched. The Constitution had envisaged, indeed, many other changes and had made due provision for them



but, except in the legalistic sense, they had not come into being. In 1800, however, one of them was suddenly enforced. It was the principle of majority rule. Previous elections had been little more than ratifications of programs devised and candidates selected by a small ruling class. Federalism was the program and Adams the candidate chosen by that group in 1800, but Jefferson appealed from the ruling class to the majority and the majority sustained him. Nevertheless, Jefferson himself was a member of the group from whose decision he appealed, the first "traitor to his class," and he was hated with the virulent hatred that such men always arouse. However, in politics there is no arguing against a success; and his success was so immense that the principle of majority rule was firmly established, without, however, disturbing the tradition that the candidates should be members of the ruling class, personally, as well as politically, conforming to the specifications of what was then regarded as a gentleman.

Mr. Clay had no cause to quarrel with this tradition, for he was a member of the ruling class—not always in office, to be sure, but when not in office prominent in the opposition, and therefore a part of the governmental structure. Men are seldom inclined to quarrel with, or even to examine realistically, traditions that suit their convenience; if Mr. Clay regarded as fundamental to the structure of the republic the tradition that candidates for the Presidency should be chosen by members of Congress in caucus assembled, that is nothing to cause wonder. The corollary, that presumptive candidates should cultivate the art of pleasing Congressmen, rather than pleasing the voters, probably never occurred to him, but he probably

would have accepted it, had he thought of it, as in nowise contrary to the spirit of the republic.

But in 1828 the second great shift of emphasis occurred. In that year the majority insisted on choosing, not merely the gentleman most pleasing to it, but the man most pleasing. Andrew Jackson was not a gentleman. He was honest, he was brave, he could, when he chose, exhibit a charming courtesy, he was chivalrous to a fault, and he would not lie. But he was not a gentleman, as the term was then defined at Washington. Gentlemen had to be accepted socially by the ruling clique and the wild Westerner had never even made a bid for acceptance. Nevertheless, in 1828 he was elected President, and many good people besides Henry Clay felt that the mudsills of the republic had been upheaved.

From 1828 it has been of much less importance for a Presidential candidate to please members of Congress than it has been for him to please the voters. Clay did not believe it. A great many others did not believe it, and wore their lives out trying to prove that it was not really so. But Martin Van Buren understood it instantly, and made his whole career conform. He understood it so well that he showed no hesitation in outraging all Washington, except the man in Washington that the people idolized, by knocking at Mrs. Eaton's door.

The lady so ungallantly described as "the Eaton malaria" has never been proved guilty of the offenses with which she was charged, but unquestionably she was guilty of an offense that, socially, is far less pardonable than mere adultery; this was the offense of being low-born and at the same time pretty, witty, and tremendously attractive to

men. The ability to fascinate men is a dangerous one for any girl to possess in any society; but for a girl who had been a barmaid in her father's tavern to possess it, in the Washington of 1829, was unforgivable. Peggy was completely impossible. Later, in Madrid, at the most austere court in Europe, she was an immense success; but in Madrid she was a foreigner, the wife of a diplomatist, and who worries about the obscure origin of an officially accredited foreigner? In Washington, at that time, Peggy simply wouldn't do, and no one knew it better than the dapper little gentleman who was Secretary of State in the cabinet of President Jackson.

But the old soldier, whose ignorance of social precedence was surpassed only by his superb contempt for it, was not aware that it is an appalling crime for a girl born, as we say now, on the wrong side of the railroad tracks, to be successful socially. More than that, he flatly refused to learn. There was a reason. The only woman to whom he had given his complete devotion had been crucified by malignant gossip; therefore, the innate decency that made him fly to the rescue of anyone whom he regarded as unjustly attacked was reinforced, in the case of a woman whose virtue was assailed, by the white-hot personal hatred he had for the purveyors of scandalous gossip.

This was a situation of no value whatever to a statesman, but marvelously suited to the purposes of a politician, and marvelously did the most perfect politician of his time make use of it. Mr. Van Buren, a widower and therefore with nothing to fear at home, went to extraordinary lengths to be courteous to the wife of his colleague, the Secretary of War. Mr. Van Buren danced with Mrs. Eaton,

Mr. Van Buren gave dinners for Mrs. Eaton, Mr. Van Buren called upon Mrs. Eaton assiduously; well knowing that all these activities would be faithfully reported to Mrs. Eaton's terrible old champion in the White House. It is impossible to doubt that it was effective. It had much to do with Van Buren's success in winning the complete confidence of Jackson, and that confidence is what made the New Yorker Jackson's successor in the Presidency.

The election of 1836, viewed in the perspective of more than a hundred years, is one of the most astonishing episodes in our national history—ironical to the verge of incredibility. The electorate had available for the office of President, in the opposition, John Quincy Adams, Henry Clay, John C. Calhoun, Daniel Webster; and on the side of the Administration, Thomas Hart Benton, Edward Livingston, Roger B. Taney, John Forsyth and Lewis Cass. With this tremendous array of talent in public life, the country chose Martin Van Buren. The explanation was the word of Jackson; and the explanation of that word is, in part and no small part, the fact that Mr. Van Buren had knocked at Mrs. Eaton's door.

The fact that this man—known by the combination of his subtlety and his red hair as “The Red Fox of Kinderhook”—rose to the highest office during the most brilliant period of our political history has led some observers to despair of democracy. But this despair rests upon a doubtful basis—the assumption that the office of President of the United States belongs of right to the most powerful intelligence in the country. Popular instinct rejects this assumption. Rarely if ever has the man in the White House been unrivaled intellectually; so frequently that one may

say normally he has been clearly overshadowed by other men in public life.

But it does not follow, as the cynics say, that this is proof that there is in the nature of democracy something that is repelled by true greatness, an ineradicable preference for the second rate. On the contrary, it may be a sound instinct. Let us remember that high intellectual capacity is not infrequently accompanied by an arrogance that tends to increase with age. In a subordinate, this may not be of prime importance, but an arrogant man, clothed with the enormous powers that belong to a President of the United States, may be immeasurably dangerous, and certainly he will seem so. Clay, Calhoun, Webster, and Benton all were arrogant men, and all seemed dangerous.

As a matter of fact, the American people have been suspicious of the Presidency since the beginning, and on every occasion—roughly, at twenty-year intervals—when a man incontestably of the first rank has succeeded to the office, he has frightened large sections of the people horribly. Editor Dwight's eloquent description of how Jefferson held Connecticut dangling over the mouth of hell is a florid example; and only a few years earlier Jefferson, himself, contemplating President Washington, had expressed an anxious hope that the President's virtues might not prove to be the country's ruin. Twenty years later Washington and Jefferson both were canonized, but J. Q. Adams was confiding to his diary a belief which he shared with many others that the man then in the White House, Andrew Jackson, had brought the country to such a condition that it could not last twenty years longer. Twenty years after that, the uncouth apparition from

Illinois convinced the South that the end was indeed at hand. Slightly more than twenty years after Lincoln's death the President was twisting the British lion's tail, while the country broke out into a cold sweat, and twenty years after Cleveland's first election, Theodore Roosevelt was delivering us all to the radicals. A decade after Roosevelt, and less than twenty-five years ago Wilson was frightening us with his peace far more than he had frightened us with war. Every one of these men is now recognized as a great President, from which it is evident that a great President always frightens the country. To say, however, that one who frightens the country is always a great President, would be going too far, since it would confer the title on both Monroe and Johnson.

It is incontestably true, however, that of all the terrifying men who have occupied the White House—not excluding even present company—the one most sincerely dreaded was Andrew Jackson. Senator Lacock, for example, undoubtedly believed that the General was quite capable of cutting off the senatorial ears as, so Lacock was told, he had threatened to do. "How long I shall be spared mutilation I know not," he wrote to his friend John Binns at the height of the excitement, but he was resolved that he would "not die soft. I will remain here as long as he does, and take the consequences. I have most conscientiously discharged my duty to the nation, and shall take with me to private life what will console me much, the approbation of a good conscience." It is plain that he doubted his ability to take his ears, also, to private life.

There is no evidence that Senator Lodge ever feared that President Wilson would take off his ears, or that Senator

Gorman dreaded mayhem at the hands of President Cleveland, or Senator Sumner at those of President Lincoln, although all these Senators were convinced that their respective Presidents were dangerous men. True, Jackson was not yet President when the Senator from Pennsylvania wrote that plaintive letter; but the reputation for ferocity with which he assumed office was hardly lessened during the eight turbulent years that followed. In 1833 Calhoun unquestionably thought it quite probable that Jackson would have him hanged; and there is very good evidence that Jackson thought so, too. It is highly improbable that such thoughts ever disturbed the mind of any other Vice President, even though he had been unfortunate enough to incur the displeasure of his chief. Mr. John Nance Garner, for example, may have returned to Texas in 1940 filled with forebodings, but it is beyond belief that visions of the gallows played any part in whatever nightmares he may have had.

But the people that Jackson frightened were the articulate, exclusively. To the voiceless masses, Presidential thunder and lightning is not terrifying, but only a dramatic and entertaining spectacle. In 1836 the masses would have elected any man Jackson told them to elect; but the fact that his choice fell on Van Buren unquestionably pleased the bulk of the people, for the simple reason that he had spent the previous eight years building up the reputation of a pleasant fellow and a good sport. His greatest stroke was made in connection with the rejection of his appointment as Minister to England, and it is so perfectly characteristic of the man, and at the same time so marvelous a bit of political strategy that it deserves recapitulation.

To get rid of "the Eaton malaria" Van Buren resigned from the Cabinet. As he was Secretary of State, that forced the resignations of the other members, including Eaton, Secretary of War, but without casting any obloquy upon Eaton, thereby saving everyone's face. Jackson thereupon made Van Buren his envoy at London. The nomination had to be referred to the Senate, of course, but that was regarded as a mere formality, as such appointments had always been confirmed without question. But Calhoun, Webster and Clay were wedded to the strange delusion that Van Buren was the Master Mind behind Jackson, so they determined to get him, and they did; they blocked the confirmation. As Van Buren had already proceeded to his post, his position was dreadfully embarrassing, and he was correspondingly mortified and enraged. But the country, estimating Van Buren's real weight more accurately than the great Triumvirate, would not believe that the attack was really aimed at Van Buren; the public saw it as a blow at Jackson with poor Van Buren being used for a club. Van Buren swiftly caught the point and skillfully strengthened the impression by landing in this country serene, smiling and debonair—just the attitude of a man who was perfectly sure that nobody was attacking *him*, but only battering him to get at someone else. The result was that he became immensely popular, as the sort of man who would gallantly take a beating in behalf of his friend and never whimper.

Note the action and reaction: he crossed his opponents by resigning from the Cabinet; they doubled-crossed him by throwing him out of his post at London; and he triple-



crossed them by letting the public believe that his sufferings were all for Jackson's sake.

The thing is superb, a textbook example of practical politics, and not the least of its perfections is the fact that it was perfectly fraudulent from start to finish. Nobody concerned, on either side, told the truth with regard to any step. Van Buren never admitted publicly that he was resigning from the Cabinet to clean up the Eaton mess; on the contrary, he published a number of high-sounding reasons, all false. The Triumvirate never admitted that they were out simply to discredit Van Buren politically in refusing to confirm his nomination as Minister to England; they assigned six reasons, also high-sounding, and also false; finally, the country's impression, sedulously cultivated by Van Buren, that he was a martyr to his loyalty to his friend was completely false. But it helped make him President of the United States.

The political drama of the Jackson administration was much too clangorous and spectacular to escape close scrutiny, and its movement and counter-movement, thrust and parry, have fascinated many students since.<sup>3</sup> But after Andrew Jackson had played his part and passed from the great stage of Washington, there followed a curious tripartite drama to which relatively little attention has been paid. The members of the cast were Henry Clay, Martin Van Buren, and William Henry Harrison; but the play itself has been ignored, because it was not consciously designed, and the actors were largely unaware of the parts they were playing or, indeed, that they were playing any

<sup>3</sup> Notably Claude G. Bowers, whose *Party Battles of the Jackson Period* is the most entertaining, not to say the best, of that brilliant historian's books.

part. These were the days of the great duel between Clay and Calhoun, with the continued existence of the Federal union at stake, and few men had eyes for the by-play. They were intensely solemn days, almost as solemn as our own, and few had any taste for the rich humor of the situation; indeed, the richest of that humor was imperceptible at the time, becoming apparent only years afterward; finally, the joke was on the actors, and it is difficult for men to see that sort of joke.

Henry Clay was as clearly a statesman as Van Buren was clearly a politician, yet in many respects the two men were singularly alike. Each was an affable man, with a genius for making friends. Each was a man of charming manners and a great favorite among the ladies. Each looked upon his fellow-countrymen with a tolerant and mildly cynical eye. They were both, judged by the standards of an Adams, half-educated, but each had a startling facility for acquiring almost at a glance just so much knowledge of a subject as would serve his purpose, and, once the purpose was served, neither evinced much inclination to pursue any subject further. Yet, while their knowledge of books was superficial, each had a capacity for judging men so swift and so accurate that contemporaries deemed it uncanny.

Clay was tall and ugly, Van Buren was short and handsome; Clay dressed just well enough to pass without comment, Van Buren was a bit of a dandy; Clay was the very spirit of the West, Van Buren that of the East; but all these differences were trifling. The vast gulf that lay between them was simply this; Clay was cast by nature to play the role of a great man, Van Buren that of a small one.

As long as each man stayed, as the actors say, in character, his success was immense. Moralists have been swift to point out that retribution fell upon Clay whenever he stooped to evasion and equivocation; but they have been slow to point out that retribution likewise fell upon Van Buren whenever he rose to true greatness.

But the ironical masterpiece of this group is its third member, William Henry Harrison, probably an honest man, and certainly not a subtle man, yet one of the most contradictory figures in American history. It was Harrison's singular fate to lose money when he worked hard and intelligently, to grow rich when he gambled recklessly, to be loaded with praise when he engaged in dubious enterprises, to be damned for a traitor when he won the country's battles, to be scorned for what he was, and to be exalted to the skies for what he emphatically was not. Admittedly ignorant of politics, he beat the master politician who had beaten Clay, Webster and Calhoun. After a long career of frustration, disappointment and bitterness, he was suddenly elevated to the very summit of political ambition—and it promptly killed him. He is, in fact, so startling a figure that he will have separate attention in a following chapter; so let us lay him aside for the moment, to return to him later.

For years Henry Clay's political ambition was thwarted by the opposition of Andrew Jackson. It is frequently assumed that this opposition, steeled by personal hatred, began when Clay made J. Q. Adams President over Jackson, who had won the plurality both of popular and of electoral votes. But it was older than that. Clay's support of Adams in 1824 was not, in itself, discreditable or un-

worthy of a statesman. Adams was a competent man who made a good President. Five years earlier, however, Clay had already made an enemy of Jackson by a speech in the Senate in which, not directly, but by plain implication, he described the Tennessean as a man displaying all the more unprepossessing characteristics of Nero, Attila the Hun, Benedict Arnold and the common hangman. It was an erroneous estimate, but even such an error might have been excused since, viewed from certain angles, Jackson did bear a remarkable resemblance to the Prince of the Powers of Darkness. What made this speech unpardonable in a man of Clay's standing was the fact that it was thoroughly insincere. Clay knew little about Jackson and cared less; the man he was really attacking was President Monroe and he used the General merely as a club with which to belabor the President.

The speech was made in connection with General Jackson's irruption into Florida in 1819. Florida was Spanish territory, and Clay accused Jackson of having, in invading it, trampled upon international law, and upon the Constitution of the United States; of having deliberately disobeyed the orders of his superiors; of having conducted the war with a barbarity that brought disgrace upon the military service; and he stopped just short of accusing him of multiple murders—he said "execution," but he added, "nothing but my high sense of the distinguished services and exalted merits of General Jackson prevents my using another term." Yet he voted against cashiering this appalling officer, or even formally censuring him. Either he didn't believe his own speech, or he was recreant to his duty as a Senator. The truth is that he didn't believe the

speech, but he considered it a heaven-sent opportunity to create trouble for the administration to which he was opposed. It did create some trouble, although the trouble soon blew over; but by playing this bit of cheap politics Clay made an enemy who harried and harassed him for a dozen years and who, in 1832, gave him a more terrific beating in a Presidential race than Adams had received four years earlier.

All this is in the finest tradition of copy-book morality. Parson Weems himself would admit that when a man capable of greatness stoops to pettiness and thereby brings trouble upon himself, the sequence of events is right and proper.

Consider, then, the course during those same years of the Red Fox of Kinderhook. Mr. Van Buren consistently and persistently pursued the course that had brought trouble upon Mr. Clay. He consorted with "the Eaton malaria." He always "rowed to his object with muffled oars." Not once, but habitually, he attacked one man when his real object was to damage another. This is not altogether inference from the record of events. For a great deal of it we have Van Buren's own word in his "Autobiography," one of the most amazing revelations ever made of the working of the political mind. By following this course with perfect consistency he strode from triumph to triumph. The disruption of the Cabinet in which he was Secretary of State merely made him minister to England. The success of his enemies in securing the rejection of his nomination after he had already proceeded to his post merely made him Vice President. The foolish attack on the Vice President as the brains of the Administration made him President.

Even this, however, is not inconsistent with copy-book maxims. Every writer of edifying instruction for school-boys has had to admit that sometimes the wicked flourish even as the green bay tree.

The part of Mr. Van Buren's career that embarrasses the moralists came later. Only after his election to the Presidency did he develop inconsistency. Only after his election did it become apparent that he was not entirely the cheap politician, the trickster and manipulator. Mr. Van Buren's experience was that of the unfortunate Herbert Hoover a hundred years later—the previous administration had sowed the wind, and he reaped the whirlwind. Scarcely was he settled in the White House when the great panic of 1837 struck the country. It was almost altogether a money panic, not precipitated by any profound changes in the national economy, but the momentary effect was fully as appalling as that of the crash of 1929, and the terror it aroused was, if possible, even greater.

Naturally, the President was buried under an avalanche of advice, most of it bad, but some of it politically shrewd. For instance, he was vehemently urged to abandon the policy, inaugurated by Jackson, of demanding payment for Government land in specie, and to accept, instead, the notes of wild-cat banks. Without doubt, this would have alleviated the prevailing distress, perhaps halted it for some years, but only by aggravating the conditions that had produced the panic in the first place. One of the prime causes of the disturbance had been the insane orgy of speculation in Western land, made possible by the flood of paper money issued by private banks. After the Jackson order this paper was no longer good at the land offices, that is to say, it

could no longer purchase the chief commodity of the current speculation. Naturally, its value dropped precipitately. If Van Buren had rescinded the Specie Circular, allowing land to be sold for paper, the merry orgy could have been resumed perhaps to last for the remainder of Van Buren's term. Of course, if this policy had been adopted, the crash, when it did come, would have been doubled and redoubled in violence; but it is possible that it might have been postponed beyond Van Buren's time.

Against all such schemes the man who had hitherto been a limber and devious politician set his face like flint. Not even to save the Van Buren administration would he subject the country to certain disaster. He knew that the Specie Circular was sound in principle, no matter how sharp its immediate effect; and he knew that its abandonment, although popular for the moment, would result in infinite damage to the country and in the ruin of countless honest men. The duty of a statesman, in such circumstances, is clear—he must set the country above his party and pursue the course that will protect the country, even at cost of his own ruin. But Martin Van Buren had never been a statesman. He was only a politician, and it is inherent in the very nature of a politician to avoid the unpopular course. Nevertheless, he stepped out of character in this instance, and pursued the course of a statesman.

Perhaps it is somewhat less remarkable that he was adamant against terrific pressure to restore the Bank of the United States. He and his party had fought the Bank so long and so violently that to consent to its restoration must have involved some self-stultification. Even a politician objects to reversing himself suddenly and spectacularly.

Yet in this matter, too, it can hardly be denied that Van Buren followed the course of a bold and far-sighted ruler. One may dismiss as mere political rhetoric many of the charges that Jackson Democrats brought against the Bank and yet perceive that the thing did embody an evil principle. The Bank was the fiscal agent of the Government, handling all the Government's funds, yet it was not owned or controlled solely by the Government, which was a minority stockholder. Control was in the hands of a group of financiers, responsible to the people only indirectly, if at all. For a group of financiers to have their hands on the people's money was dangerous; for the power of such a group could not fail to be enormous.

Van Buren was well aware of the extent of that power, for he had felt it during the long battle against the Bank. He was not willing to re-establish that power, even to protect himself against popular wrath. Yet countless citizens of the highest standing were anxious to make it easy for him to do so. No satisfactory substitute for the Bank, as a regulator of the currency, had been devised and many honest and patriotic men thought it would be better to risk its evils than to attempt to struggle through the catastrophe without it. Thus the President had to stand firmly against not only politicians and speculators, as in the matter of specie payments, but, in the matter of the Bank, against many men known to be honest and reputed to be wise.

But he stood. When the crisis came the Red Fox dropped his foxiness and turned into a man—a distressed and somewhat ineffective man, to be sure, but an honest man and a bold one. He was never a financial wizard and the panic



was far beyond his control. The measures he took to cope with it worked with painful slowness when they worked at all; but most of them were essentially sound, and all of them were obviously designed for the good of the country and not for the good of Martin Van Buren and his political friends. Instead of setting up fair-seeming, but fraudulent, legislation to shelter himself from the storm of popular wrath, he chose, instead, to stand and take it—and he got it, full measure, heaped up, shaken together, and running over. For refusing to play cheap politics Martin Van Buren, in 1840, received such a smashing defeat as Henry Clay had received in 1832, not for being bold and honest, but largely for playing cheap politics.

Now what is the moral in this? When a great man stoops to pettiness and thereby brings disaster upon himself, the sense of justice is satisfied. But when a petty man for once rises to greatness, and thereby brings disaster upon himself, how does that fit into our scheme of morals?

The man who beat Van Buren was the third actor in this topsy-turvy drama, the well-nigh forgotten William Henry Harrison, but his position will be examined here only as it entered into the double drama of Clay and Van Buren.

That drama was not yet played out when Van Buren, in 1840, met shattering defeat as the direct result of his having played the statesman in the White House. Indeed, its most theatrical, not to say its most important, scene was yet to come. Once more Mr. Clay was to stoop, and once more Mr. Van Buren was to rise above himself; and once more each was to bring disaster down upon his own head.

Relieved of the responsibility of the Presidency, Mr. Van Buren made hay while the sun shone. For four years

he had of necessity neglected his political satrapy in New York, and the formidable Thurlow Weed, a skillful practitioner of Mr. Van Buren's kind of politics, held the citadel. But, able as he was, Weed was no match for the Red Fox, and within two years he was heaved out of control and the Albany Regency was re-installed with Van Buren as Regent. At the same time his political contacts throughout the country were re-established and his political fences repaired with speed and cunning.<sup>4</sup> One of his characteristic activities was a pilgrimage to pay his respects to the ancient hero of the party, Andrew Jackson, now ending his days in Tennessee. His latest biographer, Alexander, makes some cutting comments on the route he chose to lead him to the Hermitage—a U-shaped journey that took him through most of the seaboard States and up the Mississippi Valley, with political conference, of course, at every halt. There was probably a little trading with the enemy involved; certainly there was a halt at Ashland, home of Henry Clay, who had just resoundingly "retired" from the titular leadership of the Whig party, which, as everyone understood, only established the more firmly his real leadership. Perhaps at Ashland a bargain was struck by which the two prospective candidates proposed to dispose of the most troublesome issue of the campaign, the annexation of Texas; but if the bargain was made, it failed to bind.

<sup>4</sup> Mr. Holmes Alexander sketches rapidly but clearly this phase of Van Buren's life in Book IV, Chapter 1, of *The American Talleyrand*; but with his comment on the Texas letter, I cannot agree, even though his strictures on its verbosity are deserved. It was the style of the times, and I think Van Buren's intention was to make his position clear, but to express it with the dignity befitting an ex-President which, in those days, meant in a vast number of words.

In any event, by the beginning of the next Presidential year, 1844, Mr. Van Buren, assiduously practicing the sort of politics of which he was a master, had consolidated his position at the head of the Democratic party so firmly that it seemed that nothing short of a political miracle could dislodge him. But a political miracle did—the politician momentarily turned statesman again, and this time it finished him.

Mr. Clay, in the meantime, had been making heavy weather upon a sea of troubles. Not all of these, it must be admitted, were of his own making, although some of them were. In 1836, for instance, he had played some rather cheap politics. Jackson was not himself a candidate that year, but it was perfectly clear that against the prodigious influence of Jackson no opposition candidate would have any chance whatever. Henry Clay, as recognized leader of the opposition, was the logical man to oppose Jackson's choice, but the Kentuckian had no fancy for a second beating; therefore, instead of running himself, he promoted the candidacy of what seemed to be a harmless old Virginia gentleman then resident in Ohio. William Henry Harrison was deliberately sent to defeat by Clay. To be sure, Clay did not nominate him, but he acquiesced in his candidacy with no displeasure, much as some leaders of the Republican party were not displeased to see Wendell Willkie thrown to the wolves a hundred years later.

But it was Clay's curious destiny never to profit by disingenuousness. Poor old Harrison marched "through a slaughter-house to an open grave," exactly as Clay had expected, but that wasn't the end of him. Having made the campaign, he had a certain claim to the titular leadership

of the party—at least enough of a claim to make him an instrument in the hands of Clay's enemies within the Whig party, one of whom was the alert and ingenious Thurlow Weed. When 1840 came, and it was plain that the traditional yellow dog could beat Van Buren, crippled by his own honesty in withstanding the eccentrics during the panic, Weed found his opportunity. In the all-important State of New York he used against Clay an extraordinary political trick—a reversal of what later came to be known as “the bandwagon stampede.” Professed friends of Clay wrote letters to each other, all of the same general tenor. Their burden was, “Redouble your efforts for our friend Clay in your district, for in this one he is sunk.”<sup>5</sup> These letters were never published, of course, but were discreetly exhibited to the genuine Clay men for the purpose of discouraging them. They were effective enough to break Clay's strength, and in the convention he lost the golden opportunity. With nomination equivalent to election, he could not secure the nomination. It went, instead, to the man he had thrown to the wolves four years earlier, old Harrison, who was triumphantly elected.

Clay had no responsibility, however, for the supreme irony of that ironic campaign. This was the selection of a disgruntled Democrat as Harrison's running-mate. John Tyler was an arrogant and opinionated Virginian, whose dislike of Whig principles was exceeded only by his dislike of Jackson's personality. He resigned his seat in the Senate rather than obey his State's instructions to support Jackson

<sup>5</sup> Henry A. Wise is responsible for the story of this “triangular correspondence.” A good account of how it worked is to be found in Glyndon G. Van Deusen's *Life of Henry Clay*, p. 326.

and, naturally, was warmly congratulated by Clay, the Whig leader, on his revolt. He favored the nomination of Clay, and this gave some color to the theory that he was a Clay man; but Thurlow Weed himself is responsible for the statement that Tyler was given the Vice-Presidential nomination because no one else would have it.<sup>6</sup> At any rate, even if Tyler was named for the purpose of placating Clay, it is certain that Clay was not responsible for the choice.

It was disastrous for the Whigs, because Harrison assumed office and promptly died, leaving his party with a Democratic President on its hands. Clay at first had no conception of the significance of the event, for he did not understand the effect that a large office sometimes has upon a little man. President Tyler acknowledged no obligation to the Whigs, although they had put him in office, and still less was he disposed to acknowledge an obligation to accept orders from the Whig leaders. Clay's party held Congress, but not by a majority large enough to over-ride a Presidential veto; and he made the mistake of assuming a dictatorial tone toward the President. The result was that Tyler torpedoed every important measure that Clay jammed through Congress, including the Bank and the tariff. Half-way through the President's term Clay dramatically resigned his seat in the Senate, moving a rhapsodic spectator to compare his exit to the soul's leaving the body, and declaring that he was no longer leader of the Whig party.

<sup>6</sup> It is but fair to state that Tyler has his friends and, especially in recent years, valiant efforts have been made to rehabilitate him, the ablest, perhaps, being that of O. P. Chitwood in a biography published in 1939. He mentions Weed's statement (p. 172), but doesn't believe it.

It was not a bad move, from the political standpoint. The whole country understood that what he was doing was not in fact withdrawing from public life, but merely clearing for action against Tyler in 1844. Under the circumstances, fair-minded men could not blame him, for his position in the Senate was impossible. Up to this point, there was nothing underhanded or dubious in his course of action, and it was highly successful. From the moment he quit the Senate there was no doubt at all that he would be the Whig nominee.

Then the Red Fox came to Ashland. What the two men said to each other is a secret they carried to their graves, and all the researches of historians since have not uncovered it. Even the latest biographers are in disagreement. Alexander, biographer of Van Buren, is pretty sure they made a deal whereby they hoped to eliminate the Texas issue altogether, but, if that proved impossible, by the terms of which both were to speak out against immediate annexation. Van Deusen, biographer of Clay, is inclined to think no bargain was struck.

In any event, what happened is clear enough. Texas could not be eliminated, and they had to speak; whereupon each man once more stepped out of character, with ruinous results.

Texas was one of those issues from which politicians pray to be delivered as they pray to be delivered from war, pestilence and famine. It aroused both passionate interest and logical dispute. In short, it was a real issue and the political game can never be played to perfection when reality intrudes.

Texas had been until recently a part of Mexico geo-

graphically and politically, but it had never been Mexican because it had been empty. The State was actually colonized by emigrants from the United States, and at the time of its revolt it was so overwhelmingly American that its Mexican population gave the revolutionists almost no trouble at all. This is a phase of the question that is frequently overlooked, but it is important, because it accounts in large measure for the moral certainty of the annexationists. They were not proposing to incorporate a foreign population in the Union by right of conquest. They were not proposing to extend their dominion over a people alien in language and in culture, because the Texans, except for a small fraction, were Americans.

These considerations, although we are likely to forget them now, were very much in the minds of realists in 1844. They were dominant in the minds of many men in the North, so it was easy to find Northerners who regarded the annexation of Texas as obviously an example of Manifest Destiny.

Nevertheless, the fact remained that the most extravagant territorial claims ever advanced by enthusiastic Americans had never included more than a mere fringe of the north-eastern corner of Texas. The fact remained that the vastly greater part of that region had been under the undisputed sovereignty of Mexico until Americans began to infiltrate it. The fact remained that the motives of the revolutionists were, to put it mildly, open to question; for the measures which Mexico had taken to prevent the further Americanization of Texas, from the Mexican standpoint, were not unreasonable.

These considerations were dominant in the minds of men with a high regard for legality in international relations, so

it was easy to find Southerners who regarded the annexation of Texas as a crass adventure in imperialism. It was roughly true, but only very roughly, that the South was for immediate annexation, and the North against it. In both sections of the country there were men of both opinions.

What drew even a rough division between the sections was not the question of annexation itself, but its bearing upon the far thornier problem of slavery. This matter was, above all other things, the politicians' horror. Jefferson was far from unique in hearing the first debate upon it as "a fire-bell in the night." Every man who had need of votes, and therefore courted popularity, heard it the same way. At this time only a few fire-eating Southerners and fanatical Northerners were sufficiently assured of the solidity of opinion in their districts to approach the problem confidently. Every man who appealed to a national constituency treated it gingerly, for in the nation as a whole public opinion was still confused. Nevertheless, men were beginning dimly to perceive that the interests of the North and the South were divergent; hence a large accretion to the territory of either was bound to disturb the other; and this constantly lifted the emotional temperature of the debate.

Here, then, was a question that included everything that politicians dread. In the first place, the rights and the wrongs of the matter were so evenly balanced that honest men were to be found on both sides; and politicians are exceedingly chary of making definite pronouncements on issues on which honest men divide. In the second place, any debate upon the question of the annexation of Texas was pretty sure to develop swiftly into a debate upon the greater and far more explosive question of slavery. Finally, quite aside from the other question, the debate upon Texas



itself was charged with emotional stresses—it was loaded with jealousy, suspicion, greed, and patriotic fervor, each of which, as every politician knows, is dynamite.

At the same time, viewed calmly and coldly, as a problem in statecraft, it was not a difficult question to answer. Whether one viewed it from the standpoint of its geographical situation, or from that of the composition of its population, or from that of its economic ties, or from that of its perfectly obvious future development, Texas was plainly destined to become eventually a part of the United States. But it was equally plain that, in 1844, its legal position was far from fixed and secure. Mexico, or at least Santa Anna, had, indeed, recognized the independence of Texas eighty years before; but the exact boundaries were still in dispute and there was a question as to the legality of the recognition of independence. Annexation by the United States meant, under the circumstances, the acquisition of property with a cloud on its title; the procedure described by real estate dealers as “buying a lawsuit,” which no real estate man regards as good business. From the standpoint of a man interested solely in the welfare of the Union, therefore, the right course was perfectly clear; it was to oppose annexation until the status of Texas could be cleared without erecting insuperable barriers to its acquisition once the legal difficulties were removed.

Unfortunately, this course was one bound to displease the fanatics on both sides; therefore it was distinctly not one for a politician to follow. It was the course of a statesman, and only a statesman, indifferent to the wrath of extremists while he is intent upon the public good, could pursue it with success. It was not the course for the Red

Fox of Kinderhook; but it was the course for the Great Pacificator.

But the Red Fox followed it, and the Great Pacificator did not. As the campaign became more and more heated, the Texas question would not down. If an agreement to ignore it had been reached at Ashland, that agreement was void and of no effect, for the country demanded a declaration from both candidates, and when the declarations were not forthcoming the fury of the extremists mounted to dangerous heights. Shortly before the Democratic convention it became evident to Van Buren that he had to speak, and he did. He emitted seven thousand words—a statement of which his biographer<sup>7</sup> says, “in sheer verbosity and elaborate circumlocutions it is both a literary monstrosity and a political treasure.” Nevertheless, it gave the country a clear conception that Mr. Van Buren was against immediate annexation, although he hoped Texas eventually would become part of the Union. The politician had followed the statesman’s course.

The result was an instant coalition of the annexationists and Van Buren’s political enemies in the North. Between them, they were able to muster more than one-third of the delegates at the Democratic convention and, under the two-thirds rule, Van Buren’s clear majority on the first ballot could not give him the nomination. Gradually they wore his strength down and in the end the man named was the colorless James Knox Polk. The Red Fox never came within striking distance of the Presidency again; his determination to play the statesman had finished him, this time.

<sup>7</sup> Alexander, *The American Talleyrand*, p. 397.

The situation of Henry Clay was somewhat different. Nothing could prevent his nomination, for the Whig party literally had nobody else to offer. Webster's strength was purely sectional, and with the nomination of Polk, Calhoun had not so much returned to the Democratic party as annexed it. Nevertheless, the pressure upon Mr. Clay for a statement on Texas was every whit as strong as it had been upon Van Buren. In the course of a political tour through the South, it became evident to Mr. Clay that he, too, had to speak. So he, too, emitted words, but they didn't mean anything, or, rather, they meant too much. From Raleigh, North Carolina, he wrote a letter that apparently meant one thing, and to an Alabama editor he wrote another that apparently meant exactly the opposite. This detonated the extremists in the North; unable to determine how Clay stood, they put a candidate of their own, James G. Birney, in the field. New York gave Birney 15,000 votes, enabling Polk to carry that pivotal State by 5,000—and with New York went the election.<sup>8</sup> The statesman had adopted the course appropriate to the politician, and it had proved fatal.

Clay, too, never again came within striking distance of the Presidency. The politician and the statesman were eliminated from the great game together, and both for the same offense—for stepping out of the character assigned to each by an inscrutable and grimly humorous destiny.

<sup>8</sup> Van Deusen says, however (*Life of Henry Clay*, p. 376 note), that had not Clay straddled, although he might have carried New York, he would have lost Kentucky and Tennessee, and been beaten, anyhow. But this reasoning allows no effect whatever for admiration of a bold and unequivocal stand, which is usually worth some votes, even in Kentucky and Tennessee

## CHAPTER V

### *The Pawn*

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LIFE hung loosely upon William Henry Harrison, like a coat cut by an incompetent tailor, touching him only at irrelevant and inconsequential spots and concealing from the eyes of the world the figure of the real man. To this day it is a reckless historian who would assert without reservation that he knows what this man was; and that the researches of his latest and most painstaking biographer, Cleaves,<sup>1</sup> have done hardly more than prove that he certainly was not what he passed for in public life.

This is not to be construed as an assertion or even an implication that Harrison was a charlatan. Insincerity is the hall-mark of a charlatan, and the ninth President was sincere to a fault. Indeed, there was a great deal that was fine in the man, a great deal of ability, a great deal of character, much that was charming and more that was admirable. But he was one of those strange persons who sometimes play extremely prominent roles in public life

<sup>1</sup>Freeman Cleaves, author of *Old Tippecanoe*, published in 1939. The book may be somewhat too friendly to Harrison, but it is far from being a mere adventure in whitewashing, and the accounts of the hero's military campaigns are particularly luminous.

without ever having the faintest idea of what it is all about. Such people, although they may be endowed by nature with the most transparent honesty, are the most deceptive of men. Never intending to deceive anyone, they actually deceive everyone, and the shrewdest men they encounter are frequently the men most completely fooled. This was conspicuously true of Harrison.

He was an aristocrat—much more an aristocrat by birth than either Washington or Jefferson, as much so as either Madison or Monroe. Harrison had been an illustrious name in Virginia for nearly a hundred and fifty years when William Henry was born, in 1773. His great-great-great-grandfather had been Clerk of the Virginia Council before 1650; his great-great-grandfather had been a charter trustee of William and Mary College; his great-grandfather had been Speaker of the House of Burgesses; his grandfather had been a militia colonel, county sheriff and member of the House of Burgesses; his father was to be a member of the Continental Congress, a Signer of the Declaration of Independence, Speaker of the House of Delegates and Governor of Virginia. More distinguished lineage was hardly to be found in America. The Harrisons were not enormously rich, but none of them had lacked money enough to live spaciously and graciously; William Henry's patrimony was three thousand acres of Virginia land—not a colossal fortune, but a very respectable one.

All men, no doubt, are toys of destiny, but it is rarely that one is found as plainly and as consistently clutched in the grip of half-understood circumstance as was William Henry Harrison. It was so from the beginning. When he was fourteen the problem of his education came up.

One of his brothers was already in a mercantile house and another was a student at William and Mary. What William Henry wanted to do no one could tell, least of all the boy himself; so at last it was decided, presumably by his father, but surely not by William Henry, that he should study medicine. Thus he found himself on the path toward a professional career, hardly knowing how he got there. The preferred school of medicine in Virginia at this time was not William and Mary, but Hampden Sydney, so there young Harrison was sent; but he soon disappeared from that seat of learning, and his exit, like his entrance, was attributable to circumstances not of his making, and which he understood but dimly. A religious revival of prodigious fervor broke out at Hampden Sydney, and the elder Harrison quickly snatched his son away from the contagion, not because he objected to piety in itself, but because this was the wrong kind of religion. The revival was engineered by Methodists, and the Harrisons were all stout Episcopalians.

After a time spent in the office of a practicing physician, the boy was sent to the University of Pennsylvania, but he had hardly begun his studies there when his medical career was brought to an abrupt termination, again by no act of his own. The death of his father left the family with much land, but little cash, and his brother informed William Henry that his formal schooling was ended. What to do next he had, apparently, no idea. After trying in vain to secure a post in the Federal government, he asked advice of Governor Richard Henry Lee, of Virginia, who was visiting Philadelphia, and Lee suggested that he try the army; the Governor went further—he applied to Presi-

dent Washington, a personal friend, and secured for the young man a commission as ensign in the First United States Infantry.<sup>2</sup> Thus passively did William Henry Harrison become a soldier, as throughout his life he was to move passively into many situations in which he was astonished to find himself.

But although he drifted into army life, there was nothing passive about his application to it, once he was enrolled. No matter if its adoption had been almost accidental, it was the right career for him. It was right, that is to say, intellectually and temperamentally, for he had the qualities that go to make a fine officer; but from every other standpoint the United States army, at that time, was no career for anyone. In 1791 the regular establishment consisted of one regiment of infantry and a battalion of artillery. Never again, not even under the much-derided military administration of Jefferson, did the army sink so low. Indeed, almost at the very moment that Harrison was joining it, the army came very close to being wiped out of existence, not by any foreign foe, but by Indians. St. Clair's defeat in Ohio, on November 4, 1791, cost the lives of 600 officers and men. Ensign Harrison reached Fort Washington just in time to meet the refugees. The bitter campaign that followed was the preliminary to a series of border wars, during which Harrison served under three commanders, including Mad Anthony Wayne and the sinuous and dubious General James Wilkinson. It was the sternest sort of soldiering, during which Harrison proved that he had not only courage and the ability to command, but an excellent

<sup>2</sup> I have followed Cleaves as regards the facts of Harrison's early life, but the inferences drawn from the facts are mine.

eye for terrain and good judgment in estimating a situation. It took several years to clean up the frontier, during which time the Virginian rose to a captaincy and the command of an army post.

But with the coming of peace the disadvantages of an army career became more and more obvious. Harrison had married, against the objections of his father-in-law, who did not consider an army officer capable of supporting a wife; so when an opportunity arose to secure the Secretaryship of the Northwest Territory, a post paying \$1,200 a year, the captain resigned his commission. He also sold his Virginia land, using the price to secure much larger holdings in Ohio and Kentucky. He determined to settle down and grow up with the country as a planter.

Curiously, and contrary to the dicta of the psychologists, Harrison was a very good soldier and did not like the army; he was an indifferent farmer, and did like farming. Most men like to do the thing that they do best, but not this one. His only superior as a border commander was Andrew Jackson, of Tennessee; and as an organizer and military administrator, Harrison was better than Jackson. But his heart was not in fighting. His real ambition was to build up a great landed estate and live like a Virginia country gentleman. But in the reign of John Adams, even as in the reign of Franklin D. Roosevelt—probably in the reign of Ptolemy I, for that matter—the farmers were depressed and distressed. There is convincing evidence that William Henry Harrison worked hard and there is a high probability that he worked intelligently, but there is not much evidence that he made money at farming. On the contrary, although he had some good



years, it seems likely that he was a "gentleman farmer," that is to say, the sort that supports the farm, rather than making the farm support him.

However, if he lost money when he worked hard and intelligently, he did well when he didn't work at all, but spent his time in the form of gambling most popular at the moment. This form was real-estate speculation. In the ten years after he quit the army, Harrison picked up a number of nice properties, especially in Cincinnati and other river towns, and the profits on these deals were amply sufficient to enable him to maintain his position as a farmer.

Years later, in fact, he could do more. When his father-in-law died and his wife inherited a magnificent estate at North Bend, Harrison's financial position was good enough to enable him to indulge an expensive whim. The original house on the place was still in existence. It was a typical pioneer's log cabin, but it was placed on the choicest site available. Instead of demolishing it and erecting a modern mansion in its place, Harrison simply built fifteen rooms around the old log cabin, paneled the inside with walnut, and converted it into probably the handsomest private library in Ohio. It is incredible that he had any idea that he was creating a legend that was to become imbedded in American history when he did this; but then, except when he was soldiering, Harrison seldom had any idea of what he was doing. That is what makes him a fascinating figure.

He maintained powerful political connections in the East, and during the Jefferson administration was made Governor of Indiana Territory. He seems to have been, in the main, an excellent administrator as regards the ordi-

nary affairs of the Territory, although, until Cleaves went into it with some care, little attention was paid to that. Harrison did receive great acclaim throughout the West, however, for certain projects in the execution of which he was acting under orders received from Washington; these were the treaties which he made with the Indians for the cession of their lands in Ohio, Indiana, Michigan and even farther west. The policy was adopted by President Jefferson, not by Governor Harrison. Ethically it was, to put it mildly, a debatable policy; the Indians got none the better of the bargain. However, it cannot be denied that it was an improvement over the previous policy of dealing with the Indians, which was, in a word, extermination. Harrison, with the policy outlined for him and with the terms largely dictated, proved to be an expert negotiator. He cleared large areas for white settlement, and acquired tremendous prestige as the man who swept the Indians out of the region. His own very good work as Governor was ignored; but the account was balanced when he acquired renown for Jefferson's skill as a remover of redskins.

However, negotiation had its limits. As the War of 1812 approached, dealing with the Indians became more and more difficult, largely because the British found it to their interest not to have the Indians eliminated too easily. In throwing obstacles in Harrison's way the British agents found two men particularly useful; these were the Shawnee brothers, Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa, the latter commonly known as the Prophet. Tecumseh was certainly a man of ideas, and apparently a man of integrity, but his brother, the Prophet, was not noticeably encumbered with

either intelligence or morals. Tecumseh viewed Harrison's treaty-making activities with a displeasure which it is not hard to understand, considering the terms on which the Indians were ceding their lands, and the exceedingly doubtful legality of some of the chiefs' signatures. He moved heaven and earth to put a stop to the business, and was glad enough to receive British assistance in his campaign.

Tecumseh made no secret of the fact that he was organizing resistance among the Indians, nor is there any convincing reason to doubt that he proposed to make war, if necessary, and if he saw any chance of success. This is nothing to his discredit, since he owed no allegiance to the United States; but it must be taken into account in estimating Harrison's conduct, for it was an important factor in his calculations. It is perfectly clear, however, that Tecumseh was much too intelligent to risk a clash of arms prematurely. It was the Prophet who wrecked the whole show. Intoxicated by his own eloquence, he made so many threatening demonstrations while Tecumseh was away seeking to form an alliance with other tribes that Harrison became uneasy and decided on a military demonstration. It was intended to be merely a show of force. With a relatively small command the Governor approached the town in which the Prophet had his headquarters, on Tippecanoe Creek, and demanded an explanation. The Prophet at first was conciliatory, and Harrison pitched camp near the town, hoping that the trouble would blow over; but during the night the Prophet made the fatal mistake of persuading himself that he could deal with the white man, and at dawn he rushed the camp. There was a ticklish moment while Harrison was struggling to get into his boots

and the outposts were being cut to pieces or driven in; but once the commander was mounted and in charge, the Prophet never had a chance. It took half an hour of hard fighting, but then the Indians broke and fled. Harrison crossed the creek and wiped out their town, and with it all Tecumseh's plans went up in smoke.

The incident may be described as unfortunate all around, although it was obviously more unfortunate for Tecumseh than for anyone else; but it brought down upon Harrison a storm of criticism. It made him a hero in the West, where the situation was understood, but in Washington one might have believed that the Governor of Indiana compared unfavorably with Alva in the Netherlands, and was no great improvement upon Genghis Khan. Yet if Harrison made a single error in the campaign, that error was in not assuming from the first that the Prophet was a liar and a fool, and wiping him out without wasting time in parleying.

However, a still more remarkable reward for good soldiering was yet in store for him. The War of 1812 broke seven months after the Battle of Tippecanoe, and in the Northwest it was, if possible, more of an *opéra bouffe* than in any other theater. The fiasco of Hull's march to Detroit and his surrender was but the beginning of a long series of blunders so amazing that they strain credulity as one reads them today. The war in the East was bad enough, but in the East the United States had no commanders of demonstrated competence, while in the West it had two, William Henry Harrison and Andrew Jackson. Yet instead of using Jackson a besotted War Department preferred the egregious James Wilkinson, and instead of using Harrison it sent Hull. The collapse at Detroit left the

Northwest wide open, and a handful of British, with a few thousand Indians, threatened to sweep the Americans out entirely. Even then, Washington was slow to appoint a fighter to command, and it was with great reluctance that Harrison was named in September, 1812. At that, he had to raise a scratch army, for Hull had lost all the well-equipped troops in the territory; nevertheless he checked and held the enemy during the winter, while he raised and trained a force. The next summer he swept the British and Indians off American soil, chased them up into Canada and destroyed them utterly at the Battle of the Thames, October 5, 1813.

So he was quietly relegated to an inferior command, while two junior officers, both completely untried, were promoted over his head and Jackson's!

More than that, there was a furious outburst against him in the eastern press. He was accused of incompetence, of cowardice, of barbarity and there were even hints that his loyalty was not beyond question. In the War of 1812 it seemed that any general with the temerity to win a victory thereby infuriated Washington. A defeat could be explained away, but there was no explaining a victory.

Apparently the trouble was that Harrison belonged, or was suspected of belonging, to the wrong political party. The city council of New York passed a resolution of thanks to Commodore Perry for his victory on Lake Erie, but a similar resolution thanking Harrison for the Battle of the Thames was voted down, 12 to 5. Perry was a Federalist, and Harrison wasn't.

The last blow was delivered by John Armstrong, Secretary of War, possibly the most completely unfit holder of

that post in American history. Regardless of officialdom, the people persisted in holding in high favor a general who could win a victory. Harrison's popularity in the West was tremendous, and even in the East the street crowds shouted for him. It seemed to Armstrong, therefore, that this man must be brought down, so he apparently set out on a deliberate campaign to drive him from the army. He began sending orders over Harrison's head to subordinate officers under his command, and this produced the desired result. Harrison resigned his commission.

But not even John Armstrong could demolish the prestige that Harrison had gained by winning fights when nearly all other American generals were losing them. Henry Clay, Albert Gallatin and John Quincy Adams, around a council table at Ghent, won back the war that had been almost lost in the field. Harrison passed into private life. The Hartford Convention torpedoed what was left of the Federalist party, and Monroe came in with the Era of Good Feeling. As the years went by, it began to look sillier and sillier to object to a general because he belonged to the wrong political party. Eventually Harrison was bracketed with Andrew Jackson, in the popular estimation.

He had little to do with this. He went about his business, still working hard and losing money, but speculating enough to keep out of the almshouse, engaging in controversies with his detractors, enjoying the prestige that came to him for cleaning out the Indians, not much interested in national affairs, but frankly delighting in the celebrations that enthusiasts were always getting up in his honor on the anniversary of Tippecanoe or that of the Thames. In

brief, he was a fine old gentleman, a little on the pompous side, and not overburdened with brains, as far as national affairs were concerned, but upright, well-meaning and independent.

All these years, however, the prestige of Andrew Jackson was rising until it reached a prodigious height, higher than that of any individual, not excluding Washington, had risen while the man was yet alive; for although both Washington and Lincoln today are accounted greater men than Jackson, while they still lived they never received such popular acclaim as came to Old Hickory. With Jackson's popular influence Harrison's went up, whether he would or no, for long before 1828 the two had become associated in the popular imagination as representatives of the same type, the hard-fighting, simple, frontier patriot. Long before the Jacksonian reign was over certain shrewd politicians, unable for various reasons to secure place and power within the majority party, had begun to speculate upon the possibility of using Harrison as a sort of opposition Jackson.

In 1836 the experiment was tried. Jackson had designated Van Buren as his successor, and by all political logic the man to oppose Van Buren was Henry Clay. But Clay understood perfectly that the opponent of Van Buren would not be running against the Red Fox of Kinderhook; he would be opposing the imperial ukase of Andrew Jackson, which was still law in the United States, and he would be defeated. The Whig leader had no taste whatever for being served up as a burnt offering on the altar of Andrew Jackson's popularity, so when it was suggested to him that it might be a good idea to throw old Harrison to the

wolves, he saw merit in the suggestion. The truth was, of course, that Andrew Jackson and William Henry Harrison were entirely dissimilar except in the one circumstance that they were both good commanders in the field. But the fact that a great many people believed they were much alike was enough for Clay's purpose, and he thrust the old soldier into a fight that he should have led.

Just as Clay had expected, Harrison was slaughtered at the polls; yet when the returns were all in, they showed that the old man had put up a rather stiff fight. He collected 73 electoral votes, whereas Clay had received only 47 four years earlier; true, Clay had opposed Jackson, and Harrison only the shadow of Jackson, but the results showed that the people did think of the two generals as much alike, and the shrewder politicians took note.

What Harrison thought of it all is not very clear. Certainly he was not embittered by his defeat and felt no great chagrin over being denied an opportunity to live in the White House. It may be that, hardly knowing how he got into the fight in the first place, he really had no great desire to win, and was not ill pleased to let Mr. Van Buren have it. He freely admitted his ignorance of politics and once the election was over he seems to have made no violent effort to learn anything about that mysterious art. It was pleasant to pose as the titular leader of a party, and to go about the country making vague addresses, but he never once challenged Clay's leadership of the opposition during the stormy years that followed.

Yet the occasion was one of the most auspicious ever known for a student of politics. The administration of Van Buren was doomed from the beginning of the panic



of 1837; nevertheless, the record of the four years' duel between the greatest politician of his time and one of the three greatest statesmen—for, Jackson being in retirement, only Calhoun and Webster could dispute Clay's right to first place—is full of instruction and illumination even for us who have only the written part of the record by which to learn. Harrison, however, took only a mild interest in the combat; he learned when to cheer and when to groan, and that was about all. An honorable position on the side lines suited him admirably, and, lacking the instigation of others, he would probably have remained in it.

But there were others ready to use him. Henry Clay was never an "easy boss" and as his years increased, so did his arrogance. There were many men in the Whig party who were restive under his rule—indeed, the day was to come when as mild a man as William Henry Harrison was to revolt and tell Mr. Clay, politely, but firmly, that his presence was no longer required at the White House—and among them was the somewhat sinister figure of Thurlow Weed, boss of New York. Weed's principal contribution to the science of government in the United States was a brilliant demonstration of the effectiveness of an expert troublemaker in a democracy. Without being a great man himself, he pulled down any number of great men. Without having any notable plans of his own, he constantly frustrated the plans of others. He was the constant reminder to statesmen that in a democracy an idea is effective only after the people have been made to understand and approve it. He commands no admiration, but he was the means of preventing abler men from flying too high.

In Harrison he found the instrument by which to vent his spleen on Clay. With Harrison, he prevented the nomination of Clay in the one year when the Whig nomination was equivalent to election.

The complete neutrality of Harrison throughout this episode can be appreciated only if one bears constantly in mind the fact that Harrison was in no sense a party man. He was willing to be the candidate. Why not? He had never incurred any bond of loyalty to Clay. He had never been one of Clay's lieutenants. On the contrary, he had been conspicuously aloof from partisanship, which was one of the things argued in his favor during the campaign. If the Whigs chose to offer him the nomination, there was no earthly reason why he should feel any obligation to refuse it. Even Clay recognized this fact. Tremendous as was his wrath when the nomination was refused him in 1840, none of it was directed toward Harrison. After all, Clay himself had made Harrison the candidate four years earlier, and it was the old general's unsuccessful candidacy in 1836 that made the Whigs of the rank and file admit that he was "available" in 1840. If Harrison was useful to Thurlow Weed, it was Clay who had built him up to the point at which he could be useful. The Kentuckian was fair enough to admit that he had no just grievance against Harrison, and he worked to secure his election.

Nevertheless, the man with no training in statecraft had defeated, however inadvertently, one who had a strong claim to the title of the first statesman of the age.

So, having disposed of the statesman, the man with no training in politics sallied out to do battle with the greatest politician of the age.

The campaign of 1840 is, in some respects, the most interesting in American history, at least up to the remarkably similar campaign of 1940. It was not an important campaign. Indeed, there are reasons for regarding it as one of the least important ever fought, if the importance of a campaign is to be measured by the significance of the issues it decides. In the campaign of 1840 there were no issues. The opposition candidate, like the opposition candidate in 1940, did not pledge himself to reverse a single important policy of the administration. Since no reason existed in the situation itself, therefore, it was necessary to create a reason why he should replace the occupant of the White House.

One of the most exquisite ironies of American history is that the reason the press agents hit upon was that Harrison was a proletarian, fighting the battle of the common people against an effete aristocracy! It was superb—a Harrison of Virginia as a symbol of the hornyhanded sons of toil! Out of this developed the Log Cabin Campaign, one of the most exuberant and colorful in American history. The legend was carefully and astutely built up. In a few months vast numbers of Americans were persuaded that Harrison was a bluff old frontiersman, who lived in a log cabin and drank hard cider, and who had risen up to oppose an epicene aristocrat who ate with golden spoons and drank nothing less exotic than champagne. The fact that the frontiersman was really the son of five generations of distinguished Virginians, whose log cabin was paneled in walnut and lined with books, while the aristocrat was the son of a Kinderhook saloonkeeper, counted for nothing. The legend prevailed over the fact.

Hard times, of course, were what beat Van Buren, but there is no doubt that in 1840 he made one of the feeblest campaigns of his career. He was bewildered and confused from the start, because he faced a situation without precedent in his experience, and which he did not know how to meet. For all other eventualities the Red Fox was prepared. Intelligence he could combat with cunning. Power he could meet with adroitness. Character he could match with histrionics. But when he was confronted with nothing at all, he had nothing with which to meet it. He was nimble enough to have had a good chance against a mighty man. He was ingenious enough to have had a good chance against a brainy man. But he was not called on to fight either. He was called on to fight a proletarian who didn't exist; and against a little man who wasn't there he had no chance at all.

The election was a walkover. Harrison received 234 electoral votes to 60 for Van Buren—13 less than Harrison had received four years earlier.

The irony of that election is overwhelming. The man ignorant of both statecraft and politics had beaten successively the master statesman and the master politician. The man with no issue whatever had conducted the most thunderous campaign in American history, up to that time. The blue-blooded aristocrat had been elected by the proletariat as a proletarian. The man with no great political ambition had carried off the prize that the great Triumvirate had struggled for desperately during a quarter of a century. Finally, without any idea of what he was doing, he had carried into office with him a renegade Democrat

who was to convert the Whigs' first victory into Dead Sea fruit.

Yet it was the perfect culmination of Harrison's eccentric career; giggling Lachesis twisted the thread to the very end, and Atropos cut it with a grin. The farmer whose farm bled him but whose speculative ventures—gambling, the brutally plain-spoken would call it—restored his finances; the citizen who, for dispossessing the Indians, was hailed as a pure and noble patriot, and who, for destroying his country's enemies, was damned as a villain; he who, as the younger son of a great house, was driven, like Ishmael, into the wilderness, posing as a yokel came back with pomp and circumstance. The simple soldier, boastfully ignorant of public affairs, easily swept aside all the great experts and took for himself the crown for which they strove.

Then, when Harrison had reached the summit of political glory, came the masterpiece of irony, the touch that silences the reader's chuckles over this ironic career and leaves him chilled and a little afraid. William Henry Harrison died on April 4, 1841, having been President just thirty days.

*The Sons of Hagar*

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THOMAS EDWARD WATSON is dead and, as with Queen Anne and Marley, Scrooge's partner, that is the most significant thing about him.

He should not be dead, but he is. Oh, the mortal frame might have collapsed with reason enough, since the man was born in 1856. In the medico-legal sense Beveridge, of Indiana, is dead, and the original LaFollette, of Wisconsin, and William J. Bryan, of Nebraska. But the name of each still means something to an only moderately well-informed American, whereas even that walking morgue of extinct reputations, a newspaper editorial writer, usually has to turn to a reference book to find out who was Tom Watson, of Georgia.

The man's physical body died with perfect decorum, attended by a physician of irreproachable reputation who spoke the literal truth when he gave cerebral hemorrhage as the proximate cause of death. But that was in 1922 and his reputation as a statesman had been dead for years. It did not end decorously and in the order of nature. The cause of its death was suicide. Watson hanged his own reputation in a noose braided of strands of religious and

racial prejudice, class hatred, obscurantism and bitterness against all the world.

This was a tragedy infinitely more somber than the death of the physical body in 1922, for in the latter only one man was involved, whereas when Watson the statesman perished the best hope of one-fourth of the country was defeated and one more chance of the emergence of the South from a thralldom of forty years' duration perished too. To the South, to the nation, to humanity it did not matter in the least that a dancing dervish bearing the name of Tom Watson continued to gyrate for a couple of decades, to the amusement of the cynical and to the scandal of the enlightened.

Yet perhaps it did matter to some extent. In the course of his spinning and leaping and turning cartwheels on the stage of national politics the dervish contrived to sow a certain number of dragon's teeth. The anti-Semitism that crawls through the sunless alleys and under the rubbish-heaps of our national life, the bigotry that clings like a moldy breath to certain segments of American Protestantism, the Negro-hatred that flares now and then in hideous orgies, that wild repudiation of democracy in favor of black-jack and brass knuckles which in Germany we call Hitlerism but in America dare not acknowledge even with a name—all these perhaps owe something to Tom Watson. His was the doom of all too many Southern liberals. He lived too long.

If Tom Watson were the only specimen of his kind known to science he would still be worth examining as a sort of monstrosity. But he is not the only one. There are enough like him to raise the suspicion that he belongs to a

distinct species. He is not therefore to be regarded as a mutation, a biological sport, interesting only in himself; he is an early specimen of a type that has come to be well known in national affairs, a type that has had a measurable influence upon the national history. This is the type of the ruffianly Southern politician, represented in its fine flower by Huey Long, of Louisiana, but presenting remarkable specimens in Cole Blease, of South Carolina, Tom Heflin, of Alabama, and James K. Vardaman, of Mississippi. Hence the ecology, as well as the anatomy, of the specimen under consideration is worth some attention. What influence in his environment tended to convert Tom Watson into the sort of thing he became? If any reasonable answer to that question can be found, it may furnish a clue to one of the most curious ironies in American history.

This is the ironical fact that the region that furnished by far the greater part of the brain-power involved in the establishment of the republic, and the region that for half a century drove it steadily forward to new experimentation in liberalism, thereafter not only abdicated leadership, but became the American fortress of obscurantism. Nay, more—for the past half-century whenever the South has produced a conspicuous leader of liberal thought it has contrived to convert him, not into a conservative, as the British aristocracy did with Ramsay MacDonald, but into an example of what the Nazis delicately term *Affenvolk*, the ape-people.

Roughly for a hundred years, from 1760 to 1860, the South was the hotbed of radicalism, the nursery of able and dangerous Reds. Greatest of them all, of course, was Thomas Jefferson, but before Jefferson there were George



Mason, George Wythe, Patrick Henry, Christopher Gadsden, Charles Pinckney and a horde of others. And after Jefferson were to come Nathaniel Macon, Thomas H. Benton, John Forsyth and, above all, Andrew Jackson, all of whom were to be advocates of government by the people. These were Southerners, and if they did not always reflect dominant sentiment in the South, they nevertheless represented an important minority which on many critical dates became the majority. For a hundred years the South was the region of theorists, of experimentalists, always cutting new paths, always pushing forward American political philosophy. The South was the region of ideas, and the function of the rest of the country was to hold back, to apply the brakes, to prevent the Southerners from running off on tangents that would separate them completely from reality.

Compare that with the modern South and the contrast is striking. In 1933 a new and radical philosophy of government was projected, a scheme in its essence as revolutionary as Jefferson's theory that the man without either aristocratic blood or landed property may have both brains and character; and for ten years we have been trying out that experiment on a national scale. But was it devised by a gentleman residing on a Virginia mountain-top? Not at all. Its protagonist was a man from New York, assisted by a group assembled—as of 1943—three from New York, two from Pennsylvania, two from Illinois, and one each from Indiana, Texas and Tennessee.

What important idea, what salient personality, has the South contributed to the New Deal? Not one. The South's contribution has been precisely like New England's con-

tribution to the administrations of Thomas Jefferson. The South has applied the brakes. The one Southern member of the Cabinet, the Secretary of State, represents the extreme Right among the New Dealers. The eminent Southern Senators, Glass, Byrd, George, Bailey, Smith, McKellar have been conservatives, holders-back, rather than the protagonists of new ideas and the sponsors of new experiments. There is Pepper, of course, but—oh, well. Nor is this anything new. For fifty years every Southerner who has attained national stature in politics has been a conservative, or else disreputable. Some of them have been fine conservatives and useful statesmen. Oscar Underwood, for example, was a valuable man. So was John Sharp Williams, of Mississippi. So were a dozen others, including, most emphatically, Carter Glass, of Virginia. But all were valuable as conservatives.

Huey Long was a radical and, in a sense, he achieved national stature, but as a menace, not by reason of his contribution to the theory of government. The contribution of the South toward the movement which, whether for good or for ill, has affected the development of government in the United States more profoundly than anything else that has happened since the Civil War is wholly imperceptible. Mr. Hull's reciprocal trade treaties were unquestionably important and they may be more important in the future than they have been in the past; but they certainly were not a contribution to New Dealism. It is not difficult to perceive in the Tennessean a man of ability and a valuable statesman, probably one of the most valuable of our times, but if he is among the architects of the New Deal, then so was Grover Cleveland.

To the extent that Franklin D. Roosevelt is derivative at all, he derives from such men as LaFollette, Norris and Bryan, Westerners rather than from any Southerner save the transplanted Southerner, Woodrow Wilson. Note the adjective, "transplanted." It probably has a significance that goes beyond mere description, for Wilson was still a young man when he went to New Jersey.

Of course there are liberals in the modern South. Ten years ago Virginus Dabney wrote a whole book about them; but a glance at his index will show that he had to dredge down to pretty low levels of obscurity to bring up enough to fill four hundred pages. A few have survived in politics—for example, Josephus Daniels. But it should be noted that even as prominent a figure as the sometime Secretary of the Navy and Ambassador to Mexico never controlled the Democratic party in his own State and appeared upon the national stage by appointment of the President, not by election.

Much more nearly in line with Southern tradition than Daniels, who remained sturdily liberal at eighty, was Benjamin R. Tillman, of South Carolina. In the book referred to above Mr. Dabney dismisses "Pitchfork Ben" as never a liberal at heart in spite of the fact that he rose to power as a leader of the disinherited in South Carolina. It is true, nevertheless, that Tillman as Governor accomplished an extraordinary series of reforms tending to secure to the average man a larger degree of control over his own destiny. His trouble was not that he was illiberal, but that he was provincial; he went to the United States Senate and the instinct that had served him well in handling the affairs of his native State was not a sufficient guide in matters of

national import. The uncouth technique that he had developed in dealing with a semi-literate constituency repelled the more enlightened men in the Senate and Tillman gradually came under the influence of the Southern Bourbons, until he ended by becoming himself one of the strongest pillars of conservatism in that body.

Incidentally, his boorishness faded with his liberalism, and when the wily Aldrich thought to destroy a railroad rate bill to which he objected by entrusting its management to the notoriously violent South Carolinian, Tillman, understanding the maneuver perfectly, throttled his temper and conducted the debate with Chesterfieldian suavity—and to a triumphant conclusion.

But this was late in Tillman's career, when he had been in the Senate for twenty years or so. If Aldrich, at that time, sincerely believed that Pitchfork Ben would destroy whatever he touched, how much more profound must have been the horror of the South Carolina gentlemen of the old school when the Wool-Hat Boy first irrupted into public life! Tillman's program today would be called very mildly liberal, if liberal at all. But the men who ruled South Carolina in the last decade of the nineteenth century were not merely old and tired; they were men who had fought a disastrous war and had endured a far more disastrous peace. They had seen their armies destroyed and their land physically devastated by armed enemies; then, afterward, they had seen their civilization destroyed and their land morally devastated by a crazy fanaticism more appalling than any army. They were accustomed to monstrosities, so when another appeared among the hill-billies of the up-country, there was in them no lingering trace of skepticism to sug-

gest that Tillman couldn't be as bad as he seemed to be. War had proved to be far worse than it looked. Reconstruction had proved to be infinitely worse than it looked. Why shouldn't they suppose that Tillman, in his turn, would prove to be even worse than he looked? They did suppose it. Wade Hampton and his coterie went down fighting, and many of them carried to their graves the dismal conviction that they had rescued South Carolina from Belial only to have it snatched away by Beelzebub.

More than that, they implanted in the minds of their spiritual heirs and assigns as an article of political faith that Tillmanism was always to be fought to the death, whenever and wherever it appeared. There was to be no compromise with Tillmanites, no concession whatever to the Wool-Hat Boys, but always total war, war of extermination. The result was a generation of savage fighting, culminating in the appearance of a man who really was all that Tillman had seemed to be to the heated imagination of Wade Hampton, and even more. This was the true precursor of Huey Long both as a rabble-rouser and as a cynic, Coleman Livingston Blease. Like Huey—and, for that matter, like Hitler—he found his opportunity in the fact that among the enlightened there was no effective liberal leadership.

Very similar was the situation in Georgia when the young Tom Watson first appeared in politics, but the man was of a different type. Ben Tillman, Blease and Huey Long have all been given a wide variety of appellations, including some that are printable; but it is not of record that any of them was ever accused of being an intellectual. As a matter of fact, all three were able and Long was a great

genius, but none bore any resemblance whatever to a literary gent. Tom Watson, on the other hand, not only looked like one, he was one, and an exceptionally competent one, at that. He wrote biographies of Jefferson and Jackson—tendentious, it is true, but ably and shrewdly done—and a life of Napoleon which some quite reputable critics, men far from being prejudiced in Watson's favor, have pronounced possibly the clearest and most competently written one-volume life of the emperor in English. Throughout his career, in fact, he relied more upon the printed than upon the spoken word, although he had few superiors as an orator, either of the purple-and-gold, or of the lightning-and-brimstone school.

Although he developed into one of the great American demagogues—the greatest of his time—the man was definitely not a proletarian by origin. It is difficult to describe his social status to a generation filled with the delusion that the *antebellum* South was divided into the three rigid castes of aristocrats, poor whites, and Negro slaves. The truth is, of course, that it was an extraordinarily fluid society. There were poor whites, at one end of the social scale, and there were aristocrats at the other; but the numbers and influence of both were relatively small. Some men who were indubitably aristocrats—John Randolph of Roanoke, for instance—led a life different indeed from the imitation of the life of English “county families” that romantic novelists have presented as a picture of the pre-Civil War South.

For example, the house in which Thomas E. Watson was born bore little resemblance to Westover or Monti-

cello.<sup>1</sup> It was, in fact, merely a double log cabin, with an ell added for the accommodation of visitors. Nevertheless, its owner, Watson's grandfather, held forty-five slaves and thirteen hundred acres. His estate in 1860 was rated at \$55,000 which, for a farmer, is a long way from poverty, even today, and meant a great deal more eighty years ago than it does now.

Watson himself, in his novel *Bethany*, has undoubtedly stepped up the old gentleman's dignity and puissance very considerably. There one sees a stately lord of the manor, complete with silver-headed cane, whose active participation in affairs consisted of leisurely trips of inspection over the estate. Of course the boy remembered his grandfather only as an old man and the picture may have been true to life at the period; but in his prime the elder Watson had labored in the fields with his own hands, as did most Southern farmers, even of the gentlest blood. Nevertheless, he did hold a position of dignity in the neighborhood; he was known as Squire Watson, which was a social, rather than a political title; but the conclusive proof that he was a social leader is the fact that it was at his house that distinguished travelers were accustomed to seek lodgings for the night. Robert Toombs and Alexander H. Stephens were frequent visitors at the Watson home, and such men were not entertained by poor whites.

But this was the grandfather, who died during the Civil War. The father, John Smith Watson, was a very different

<sup>1</sup> My authority for details of Watson's early life is C. Vann Woodward who, in *Tom Watson, Agrarian Rebel* (Macmillan, 1938), has written the most dispassionate estimate of the man that has yet appeared. Mr. Woodward, it should be added, bears no sort of responsibility for the inferences I have drawn from his facts.

sort of man. Today we would call him a victim of shell shock, or, perhaps, an example of the Lost Generation. He had been a member of a hard-fighting outfit in the Confederate army. At least twice he had been wounded; and at the end, although he came out physically sound enough, something had happened to him that the army surgeons could not remedy. The case is only too familiar to us since 1918, but in 1865 people in Georgia had neither the information nor the time to deal patiently with such persons.

John Smith Watson somehow had lost contact with reality. This is not to suggest that he was insane in the legal sense, for he wasn't. But something had gone out of him, something that was essential if he was to apprehend his environment as it actually existed. We saw it happen over and over again at the end of the first World War, and we shall probably see it happen in countless cases after the second one. Yet although we understand better today what has happened, it is highly doubtful that we understand any better what to do about it than they did in 1865. What they did then was nothing at all. These psychological casualties simply had to make their way as best they could in a world with which they were no longer fitted to cope; and the innumerable tragedies that resulted were regarded as purely personal affairs, with respect to which society accepted no responsibility.

In the case of John Watson the first evidence of his inadequacy was his decision to erect, in front of the old log cabin that had been his home and the birthplace of his son, a stately mansion in the grand tradition, a lordly house with great pillars, supporting an impressive entablature, worthy of any of the First Families of Virginia.



This was undertaken, remember, right after the close of the war, when the whole South was prostrate, and Georgia, in particular, had been devastated with exceptional thoroughness by William Tecumseh Sherman. The natural, the inevitable result was that in 1868 John Watson was wiped out by his creditors. He had small chance of surviving had he proceeded with the utmost financial prudence. In those days, nobody in Georgia had much chance of surviving. But undertaking to build a great house under the conditions then existing was sheer financial suicide.

Thenceforth to the end of his days John Smith Watson was subject to recurring fits of what he termed "the blues" when he would lie on his bed with his face to the wall and for two and three weeks could not be induced to take action of any kind. The picture is recognizable by any modern psychiatrist who, seeing it once, would be able to predict the steady disintegration of personality that was to follow; but Georgia, at a time when it had never heard the word "melancholia," simply wrote John Watson down as worthless and let it go at that. In the end, the family sank to the level of shanty dwellers, until it was rescued by Tom, who was beginning to make his way in the world.

It is perhaps easy to attach too much weight to this phase of the boy's existence, but it is certainly not to be ignored entirely. On a sensitive, high-strung, poetic temperament, with no inkling of the fact that his father was in reality a casualty of the war, the anxiety and humiliation of the decline must have had a terrific effect. A psychiatrist would expect, in that sort of boy subjected to that sort of strain, the development of an excessive aggressiveness and irascibility, intended to cover and disguise his secret fear

and shame. It is precisely what happened. Thrown on his own resources Watson struck out manfully and by heart-breaking struggles managed to secure enough education to qualify as a school-teacher, then, by teaching school, to educate himself to the point where he could pass the bar examination, and by a combination of teaching and practicing law, finally to get on his feet and begin to build up a real practice. But early in the process he acquired the reputation of a game-cock, ready to fight at the slightest provocation.

Nor was he any ordinary *condottiere* with a lance for sale, who fought formally and without emotion. Every battle in which Tom Watson engaged was war to the knife, fought furiously, with no quarter asked or given. He was not merely fiery, he was deadly, also, and Georgia soon learned that no one should provoke him without being prepared to fight for his life.

It is evident, therefore, that at no time in his life did Watson meet the specifications of an ideal member of society. Yet he had qualities, as well as defects. Once established, his progress in his profession was rapid. He developed swiftly into a superb trial lawyer, and his practice was soon large and remunerative. However, he was not avaricious and his profession was to him much more than merely a means of livelihood. He had a genuine passion for public service and, at least in the early days, it was probably at least as much a desire to be of service to the public as it was to further his own political ambition. In short, he had all the qualities essential to the making of a valuable public figure, perhaps of a statesman. Yet somewhere along the line these qualities were dissipated and wasted, and the

final product was not a statesman, but an extraordinarily poisonous demagogue, whose influence is still virulent throughout the South.

How did it happen? The easy morality of the nineteenth-century South answered the question with no perplexity whatever. It simply set the man down as a reprobate from the cradle, just as it had written off his father as worthless. The South refused to bother with psychological subtleties. But that answer is full of embarrassing implications. If that is the answer, it raises another question. Why is the South so astonishingly fecund of reprobates and sterile of statesmen with original minds? From no other region, not even from Kansas at its most fantastic, has come so long and so gaudy a parade of mountebanks to astound and disgust the national capital. If they were all born so, then the conclusion is inescapable that there is some corruption of the blood below the Potomac, for people of the same racial origin do not turn out so in other regions.

There is, in fact, another answer, but it cannot be summed up in a word. The sort of man that his early life had made Tom Watson is capable of development in any of several directions, and the particular direction he takes depends largely upon his environment. The environment in which Watson developed was not peculiar to Georgia, except in minor details, but it was peculiar to the South in several of its most important phases. It was the age of gigantic material expansion throughout the country, when the energies of the American people were released in a way unprecedented in the history of the country, and perhaps in the history of the world. But in no section was it a period characterized by lofty morality; among the most

powerful of the energies released was the passion of greed, which plunged the country into an orgy of corruption that is still remembered with amazement. It included the Grant administrations and their long aftermath, characterized by scandal after scandal. The exploitation of the West was at its height. Industry was slowly, but steadily being taken over by Finance, and the banker's grip was being fastened upon all America, not to be shaken loose for a generation.

But in the South, and specifically in Georgia, this unlovely period included factors that in some ways surpassed in ugliness anything to be found elsewhere. It was in 1880, when he was not quite twenty-four, that Tom Watson first attracted state-wide attention with a speech at a political convention, and in 1880 the political situation in Georgia was a highly special one, little understood by the country to this day.

Appomattox was only fifteen years in the past but—and this is what is difficult for the rest of the country to believe—it was already far more remote in Georgia than it was in, say, New York, or Ohio. Other sections are so firmly convinced that the South spent a generation doing nothing but bewailing a lost war that a suggestion that its memory of Lee's surrender faded more rapidly than that of the North is likely to be dismissed as preposterous. It is nevertheless true, for the simple reason that events far more terrific than the surrender had intervened. Georgia, like the rest of the South, had been through the experience that bears the grimly facetious name of Reconstruction; and it was so much more horrible than war that through its murky veil the war, even in 1880, was already seen as something vastly remote and therefore idealized. Thou-

sands of men who had fought in the war were still not only alive, but vigorous; yet already they had acquired the aura of men who had participated in legendary and romantic events of long ago. Many of them had participated in overthrowing the political saturnalia commonly described as Carpetbag government, and so had acquired a second claim upon the admiration and gratitude of their countrymen. Needless to say, their influence was prodigious; in most of the Southern States they ruled invincibly for a generation.

Unhappily, a few of these men, although they had honorable records in the Confederate army, and although they had helped throw out the Carpetbaggers, proved in the sequel that they were thirty-third degree rascals. A larger number, while they cannot be described as unqualified villains, yet pursued a devious and dubious course, marked by countless evil-smelling political and financial deals.

The ills that these men inflicted upon the South between 1876, when the Federal bayonets were finally withdrawn, and the turn of the century were multitudinous; among them certainly not the least was their success in employing against the stricken land, and for their own profit, the moral values that even the disaster of a lost war could not tarnish.

Three of these are conspicuous, and in decent hands, of great social value. They have been used by able and honest leaders to bring about the greater part of such progress in civilization as the section has made. One is the tradition of breeding. While it is true that the genuine aristocracy of the South was insignificant in numbers, it did exist, and it was far from insignificant in influence. It still exists, and

it is still significant. The true Southern gentleman is now, and always was, a rarity; but he who does discover one, discovers one of the most admirable types of humanity that the continent has ever produced. A Bostonian of the finest type is his equal in personal integrity; a Philadelphian of the old school can match him in courtesy; men of the West can emulate him in courage and surpass him in wit; but the Southern gentleman stands unrivaled in the elusive quality that we call charm. The bulk of the men in the South are not and never were gentlemen of this sort; but one of the most creditable things about them is that they wish to be. It is a weakness, too, for when they find a man who seems to embody the tradition they are likely to follow him too uncritically.

The second of these moral values is the military tradition. Since the tremendous outburst of intellectual energy in Virginia that attended the birth of the republic, the South has been pre-eminently the land of the man of action. Concede Henry Clay to the West and Woodrow Wilson to the North, and its last great political philosopher was John C. Calhoun. But its men of action begin with Washington, who was both soldier and statesman and include a brilliant array of the ablest American commanders. Even its men of learning are represented rather by Maury, who mapped the oceans, Gorgas, who beat yellow fever at Panama, and Byrd, who explored the Antarctic, than by library students "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." Not every Southerner is bold, to be sure; but everyone delights to follow a leader whose physical courage is beyond debate.

Finally, there is the tradition of piety. This needs little

elaboration, since the most implacable critics of the region long ago recognized the aptness of H. L. Mencken's description of it as "the Bible Belt" and have turned what was, with Mr. Mencken, a descriptive phrase into an epithet. It is incontestably true that the South is full of canting hypocrisy, on the one hand, and of howling fanaticism, on the other; but these are both malignant hypertrophies of genuine religion, and they are unlikely to appear except among a deeply religious people. Here again, we are dealing with traditionalism; it may be true that the average Southerner is no more over-burdened with piety than the average man of any other region. But the tradition is in his blood and he pays more outward respect to the forms and exponents of religion than is common in other parts of America.

By evil chance it happened that when Tom Watson made his debut in politics Georgia was ruled by a triumvirate of worse than questionable integrity, but able to turn to profitable account each of these powerful sentiments.

Alfred H. Colquitt was a member of an old and distinguished family. He had all the outward semblance of the true Southern gentleman, including honorable ancestry. As Governor, as Senator, and as party boss his record was decidedly spotted. There was a matter of \$4,500,000 of railroad bonds, in particular, that stank to high heaven. Nevertheless, he was strong in the traditions of breeding.

John Brown Gordon had been a cavalry commander under Lee. He was five times wounded, and he led the last charge at Appomattox. After the war he made an unholy alliance with Collis P. Huntington when that eminent

buccaneer was engaged in some of the rawest of the transactions that marked the building of his railroad empire. But General Gordon was a soldier of the most glamorous type, the very beau ideal of a cavalryman. If he, as Senator, as Governor, and as party boss not merely connived at, but shared in the looting of the State, the magic names of Manassas and Malvern Hill were enough to cover mere financial peccadilloes.

John Emerson Brown was a business man of the Fritz Thyssen type and a born appeaser. He was a little too quick to make a deal with the conquerors and became badly involved with the Carpetbag government, even going so far as to organize the Negroes politically. But he had money and he made more. As Governor, as Senator, and as party boss he put the State's assets on the auction block with a cynicism that might have appalled Daniel Drew or Jim Fisk. But he was terrifically pious. He neither smoked nor drank. He was a regular attendant at Sunday School. He was a regular contributor to fifty-five charitable and philanthropic institutions. He made a powerful political asset of the religious sentiment of the State.

Any group of leaders representing, or seeming to represent, breeding, bravery and piety could then, and probably could today, come close to persuading Georgia to accept any social theory short of cannibalism. And why not? Ours is a representative democracy, and it is a sound instinct that moves people to follow leaders representative of the virtues they most admire. It was the State's misfortune that this sound instinct was betrayed by appearances not conforming to reality.



For the leaders of the Democratic party in Georgia in 1880 had more than tradition on which to appeal to the people. They had an idea, too, and although it has been denounced and denied violently in recent years it was not altogether a bad idea. It was the idea of financial gain through industrial development. They called it "progress," which was much too broad a term; but the program was not without merit at that time and in that place.

In 1938 the President of the United States described the South as the nation's Economic Problem Number One; but the South of 1938, by comparison with the South of 1880, was Ophir and El Dorado, Golconda and Cockaigne. The South had suffered not one but three devastations. Its social system, based on slavery, had become economically obsolete fifty years before the Civil War, and had been draining its substance at an accelerating rate. The proportion of bankruptcies in the South in the Fifties was appalling. Then had come four years of desperate warfare culminating in invasion, defeat, and the application by the invader of the "scorched earth policy" in Georgia. Finally, there had been ten years of misrule by an omnivorous combination of ignorance and vice which had reduced the South nearer than any other section of the country has ever come to the level of Germany at the end of the Thirty Years' War.

In retrospect it is pathetic to read of the way in which these people responded to the offer of any way out of the Slough of Despond. The clergyman at Salisbury, North Carolina, who "preached powerfully" that "next to religion, Salisbury needed a cotton factory" to give work to

the poor<sup>2</sup> was neither a self-seeker nor sacrilegious. He believed sincerely that he was preaching the Word of the Lord, and most of his neighbors thought so, too.

Obviously, these people were not merely open to exploitation, they were asking for it, begging for it—and they got it. Note well, however, that they got their cotton mills, too. The South paid too high a price for its industry—too high a price in money, and far too high a price in the establishment of false ideals and in the sclerosis of its social philosophy—but at least it got the industry. The leaders of “progress” had in many cases highly developed acquisitive instincts, but they had also energy, audacity and resourcefulness. They charged too much, but they delivered the goods, and as long as they were delivering it was difficult to make much headway against them.

It was some years after he became a figure in State politics before Tom Watson made any serious effort against them. Young, romantic and idealistic, he was himself in thrall to the Southern tradition. He accepted the ideal of the officer and the gentleman, not merely willingly but fervently. He gave almost idolatrous devotion to one gentleman, but not Colquitt, and to one general, but not John B. Gordon. His representative of gentility was Alexander H. Stephens, who was a gentleman in fact; and his representative warrior was Robert Toombs, who was a cavalier in fact. It is a strange thing to say of Watson, a pathologically suspicious man, but there is some reason to believe that he tried to think well of Colquitt and Gordon—as to Brown, he was never in any doubt.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted by Broadus Mitchell in *The Rise of Cotton Mills in the South* (Johns Hopkins Press, 1921), probably the ablest study ever made of this particular phase of Southern industrialism.

Possibly the influence that for nearly ten years kept placated this morbidly suspicious mind—at twenty-seven he wrote his wife, “I have imagined enemies where there were none: been tortured by indignities that were the creatures of my own fancy, and have magnified the gloom of every reverse”<sup>3</sup>—may have been that of a man who is currently held in low esteem. This was Henry Woodfin Grady, editor of the *Atlanta Constitution* and silveriest of the Silver Tongues of a silvery period. Modern historians and sociologists, viewing somewhat acridly the scantiness of Grady’s actual achievements and the rapture of his worship at the shrines of the profits, have been inclined to set him down as nothing but a windbag. A windbag he was, and the highpriest of materialism he was; but he died at thirty-nine, and even before the end of his short life there were indications that he had perceived that dividends were not the summation of all good. A speech he made to the Bay State Club in Boston a few days before his death shows his perturbation very clearly.<sup>4</sup>

In any event, he was a masterly political diplomatist and for the last decade of his life he was the principal trouble-shooter of the Democratic party in the State and very nearly its boss. As long as Grady lived Tom Watson, except for occasional fits and starts, stayed pretty well in line and was one of the party’s most effective campaigners. It is not beyond imagination that had the suave and skillful young master lived and grown, as he apparently was growing, he might have perceived the value of the

<sup>3</sup> Woodward, *op. cit. supra*, p. 17. See Woodward also for an excellent statement of the accepted estimate of Grady.

<sup>4</sup> John Temple Graves in *The Fighting South* (Putnam, 1943), p. 126, comments on this neglected aspect of Grady’s last days.

fiery, red-headed, fighting cock, and have steered the party, with Watson's aid, into the course of intelligent liberalism. But that is a great perhaps. In point of fact, Grady died in 1888 and two years later Tom Watson was clean off the reservation.

His course during the nineties will bear any interpretation consistent with the interpreter's social and political views. He became the leader of the Populist movement, first in Georgia and then in the nation, and what one thinks of Populism naturally will modify one's estimate of its leader.

It was a rising of the *Jacquerie*, of course, and was attended with some of the excesses and stupidities that usually characterize a revolt of the peasants at any time and in any country. But it followed the usual severe provocation and was quite unusually strict in its adherence to constitutional forms. It had, moreover, a complement of strikingly able political thinkers among its leaders and they worked out a program so far from being utterly fantastic that the bulk of it has since been taken over and enacted into law by one or both of the surviving parties.

It is patently absurd, therefore, to compare this movement with some of the more violent agrarian revolts. Indubitably, Watson was in the line of succession that runs from Watt Tyler to Edward A. O'Neal but that line includes men of extremely diverse types—as diverse as Tyler and O'Neal. The movements of the disinherited have taken many forms, not all violent and bloody, by any means; and among them the movement called Populism was certainly by no means the worst.

Indeed, it may be argued plausibly that Populism was

itself a function of that very factor in Southern life against which it was arrayed. Without industrialism in the South there might have been no Populism in the South. Without plain, unmistakable exploitation, there might have been no revolt. Without the Gordons, the Colquitts and the Browns, there might have been no Tom Watson.

Say what you will of them, the exploiters did reveal the South's capacity to produce. The railroads, the iron foundries, the cotton mills, the coal mines operated by chaingang labor, did create wealth. Most of it went into a few hands, but it was produced, and its production broke the apathy in which the Southern proletariat was sunk. In 1890, the year Tom Watson was first elected to the House of Representatives, the Georgia farmer and the Georgia wage-earner were suffering under appalling oppression; but it would be hard to prove that their condition, measured absolutely, was worse then than it had been at any time in the previous seventy-five years. But if it was no worse absolutely, it was very much worse relatively, for in 1890 millionaires were popping up like mushrooms all over Georgia. Foundations were being laid of fortunes some of which have since grown gigantic, even by American standards, and the bystanders naturally marked and observed. Adam, naked, was unashamed as long as he was not aware of his condition. The Georgia farmer, penniless, endured poverty apathetically as long as he was hardly aware that money existed. But when the banker and the time merchant, whom he had known all his life, and whose financial condition had been only moderately better than his own, turned into industrialists and began to draw fat dividends that piled up into thousands, and hundreds

of thousands, and sometimes millions, the whole situation underwent a swift and radical change.

It was hard to persuade the farmer that all this new wealth was due entirely to the superior virtue and wisdom of the business men who had accumulated it. The State of Georgia was a fairly close-knit community. The farmer had known those fellows before they got rich, and he had a realistic appreciation of their virtue and wisdom. He knew that, in the main, they were not materially superior to their neighbors; and he soon made up his mind that a large part of their success was due to their possession of advantages they had obtained whether by luck, or by sharp practice, or by something worse than sharp practice.

This aspect of the rise of the revolt was clearly understood by the men whose prosperity it threatened, or seemed to threaten. But they translated it simply into an expression of the envy of the worthless for the worthy.

It might wear that aspect. In a movement so large there were doubtless not a few who were moved by the lowest of motives. But it did not necessarily wear that aspect exclusively. In politics the prudent man always bears in mind the remote possibility that his opponent may be honest; and there is the possibility that a considerable number of Populists were actuated, not by envy, but by aspiration. The work of the exploiters had revealed to them a new vision of what might be done with Georgia; and with an economic and political organization guaranteeing, not necessarily an equal, but at the minimum a fair division of the spoils, it was evident that a strong and bountiful civilization might be created in the State. Some men there

must have been who were perfectly willing to do their share of the labor if they might be assured of a fair share of the rewards; and these certainly were not eaten by envy.

Years later Watson himself wrote of these days:

"What radiant visions lured us toward the future! What noble deeds we would achieve! What fame and influence would be our reward!

"Were conditions wrong? We would right them. Were laws bad? We would make them good. Were the weak oppressed? We would crush the oppressors. Were righteous principles enchained, like captive maidens in the olden castles of Feudal lands and lords? We would put on the bright armor of chivalry, ride forth to the rescue and smite the dungeon door with the battle-axe of Lionheart."<sup>5</sup>

Grant that this is colored by the golden glow of reminiscence. Grant that it is special pleading, put forth by a politician in his own defense. Nevertheless, there is more than a possibility, there is a probability that it represents sufficiently faithfully the spirit of a good many men, especially young men, who took part in the Populist movement. There was certainly power in it. There was certainly sacrificial devotion in it, for that was demonstrated not once, but repeatedly. Therefore there was probably high aspiration in it, and enormous force that might have been employed for useful social purposes.

*Quot libras in duce?* Under Watson the Populist movement in Georgia spent its force in savage political warfare. Would a leader of greater genius have been able to handle it and harness it to the wheels of the State?

<sup>5</sup> Thomas E. Watson, *Political and Economic Handbook* (Atlanta, 1908), p. 453.

This is one of the "ifs" of history; but it was done in another place. Eight years after Watson's second campaign, a disastrous one, in North Carolina an adroit and brilliant politician, Charles B. Aycock by name, took in hand precisely the elements that Watson led in Georgia and at the cost of no concession more revolutionary than a renovation of the State's public school system soothed them and tamed them for a generation—more, he induced them to throw their strength into a mildly liberal political and economic program that within a quarter of a century had carried North Carolina from the rear to the van of the procession of Southern States. Aycock died in 1912 but able successors maintained his tradition a dozen years longer, and not until the emergence of Robert R. Reynolds, in 1932, was there anything resembling a proletarian revolt in that State.

It is a curious and instructive fact that during the very years when North Carolina, a State without a single large city, was appeasing the proletariat by pouring literally hundreds of millions into rural roads, rural schools, rural public health services and other populistic schemes of social amelioration, the Dukes, the Cones, the Cannons, and other North Carolinians were piling up fortunes so colossal that they dwarfed even the accumulations of Joseph E. Brown. It leads one to suspect that if Tom Watson's ragamuffins had been given, not all, but a reasonable share of what they demanded, there would still have been enough to go around. Perhaps there might have been even more for the Colquitts, the Gordons and the Browns.

But it did not happen. In 1890 Watson put himself at the head of the movement of the dispossessed and there



was nobody, not even a Henry W. Grady, with the shrewdness—or should it be termed vision?—to suggest that the way to handle this movement was not to obliterate it, but to capture it by well-designed concessions and enlist its personnel under the Democratic banner.

This took some time—two years, in fact. At first the danger was underestimated. The Tenth Georgia District, in which Watson lived, had been represented for years by a rotund and respectable nonentity who had advanced in politics by the process of rigid conformity, and who was incapable of making a real fight. Watson had his farmers thoroughly organized long before the formal campaign began and the incumbent never knew what hit him. He did have the wit to perceive that he was hopelessly out-classed, however, and withdrew before the balloting began. The machine swallowed its rage for the time, and made no effort to prevent the rebel's proceeding to Washington.

But the bosses had learned the danger of over-confidence and they spent the interval in thorough preparation. By 1892 they were ready for him and this time they went after him in a really big way. The program was not merely to defeat him for Congress, but to obliterate him from Georgia politics for all time. The strategy, therefore was that of the "smear" campaign. The candidate presented by the machine was hardly more than a figurehead; electing him was merely incidental to the far more important object of eliminating Watson.

It is a truism of politics that when the righteous—or self-righteous—descend to dirty politics they are capable of putting on a campaign that would scandalize Boss Tweed, not to mention such relative Puritans as Bathouse John

Coughalan and Hinky-Dink McKenna. This was exemplified in 1892. In the actual election everything was used—bought votes, “floaters,” repeaters, stuffed ballot boxes, barrels of liquor and bales of money—and this at the end of a campaign that had been one long blast of vituperation from beginning to end. Even so, the effort failed of its main objective. Watson was barely defeated—as his friends said, and sincerely believed, he was barely counted out. But far from being eliminated, the campaign established him as a figure in Georgia politics and he remained an important figure for thirty years.

But while the old-line Democrats did not finish him, they very effectively ruined him for any good purpose. It is true, of course, that this was only partly the old-line Democrats’ fault. It was partly the fault of Watson himself. If he had been a great man, the injustice of the assault would merely have hardened him; but he was not a great man, and it corroded him. Being essentially a small man, he accepted his enemies’ style of fighting; and, being a resourceful and ingenious man, he adapted and improved upon it until he had perfected it to a point far beyond that to which the machine had carried it. His extraordinary command of English made him far more adept at vituperation than any man his opponents could bring against him; and the core of bitterness in him, probably a residuary legacy from his unhappy youth, made him readily accept vituperation as a legitimate method of warfare.

The remarkable thing is that the campaign of 1892 fell short of its main objective. When one considers the number and deadliness of the psychological weapons the dominant element in Georgia had available to use against

the man, his mere survival is impressive evidence that his understanding of the situation of the majority in the State was clear and realistic.

Remember that he was setting himself up in opposition to the men who had rescued the State from Carpetbagger rule. At the same time he was setting himself up against business men who actually had brought prosperity to the State, although that prosperity was confined to relatively few of its people. Finally in opposing Colquitt, Gordon and Brown, he was apparently setting himself up against three dominant traditions, not of Georgia only, but of all the South, the traditions of breeding, courage and piety. Imagine an Englishman in politics who would boldly repudiate Howard, Marlborough and the Archbishop of Canterbury. Imagine a French politician who would discharge fiery orations against Montmorency, Turenne and St. Denis. Imagine a Connecticut candidate proclaiming eternal opposition to Yale, to country and to God. Then you will have some conception of the position of Tom Watson when, in 1892, he attacked Colquitt, Gordon and Brown.

Yet at that they beat him by the narrowest of margins if, indeed, they beat him at all. He did not believe, nor did the bulk of his followers believe, that he was beaten. They had no doubt whatever that the election was brazenly stolen. To be abundantly fair, however, let that suspicion be dismissed and the fact of his defeat granted; still it is beyond debate that he had gathered a tremendous and a tremendously devoted following who were not drawn to him by two-dollar bills nor by free liquor. They followed him because they were convinced, and they would not have been

convinced had not much of what he said been verified by their own experience. He knew the situation of the farmer, of the tenant, of the share-cropper, whether white or black. He had a far better understanding of the real significance of the economic organization of the State than did many of his opponents, not because he was a profound economist, but because they chose to close their eyes to inconvenient facts that were plain to any man who took the trouble to look at them. In the rush and bustle of building up industrialism, it was not convenient to make sure that the benefits of the new prosperity spread down to all classes. It was much easier to close one's eyes and shout for the New Era, keeping at hand a brick with which to knock down any contumacious objector.

Events have demonstrated, of course, that Tom Watson's program could not have soothed all the sorrows of the Man With the Hoe. That is certain, because the bulk of his program was long ago put into effect, at first in other regions, and later nationally, yet the farmer continues to suffer. Populism was not exclusively Georgian, or Southern. It was a national movement, stronger in the West than it ever was in Georgia. But in the West, partly, no doubt, because it was better led, but partly because it was more shrewdly and subtly opposed, its strength was drawn off into a liberalism that has been, on the whole, fairly sane. Even in the West, it produced such apparitions as Ignatius Donnelly and Sockless Jerry Simpson, but eventually it was stolen from them by Bryan, and from him by Theodore Roosevelt, gradually being watered down into relatively mild liberalism by a combination of shrewdness in making concessions and suavity in denying them.

Populism, in short, was merely the contemporary expression of a force that will disappear only with the disappearance of all hope from the minds of the common people. Certainly it was organized discontent. Certainly it had a streak of envy. Certainly it was made the instrument of their ambition by unscrupulous men. Nevertheless, it was a power that, skillfully handled, might have made for the general betterment of society, including the top, as well as the bottom. It was not so used in Georgia.

The real disaster of the campaign of 1892 was not that it made Tom Watson a fixture in Georgia politics for many years, but that its ferocity, its unscrupulousness and its fraudulence brought out, developed to a tremendous extent, and set like cement every evil propensity in the man's character. His egotism, his suspicion, his bitterness, his truculence, his cynicism and his vast capacity for hate, all were magnified enormously and from that time on became his dominant traits. Supported and armed by his energy, courage and undeniable brilliance, they became tremendously formidable and for many years they made Georgia politics, not the process of reasonable deliberation on public affairs, but the arena of savage personal combats that sometimes flamed into gunfire, sometimes into lynchings, sometimes into orgiastic regimes of corruption.

For the purpose of this argument there is no point in tracing in detail the progressive disintegration of Watson's personality from this point. He was in and out of Congress. He was twice nominated for the Presidency. He went to the United States Senate. He lectured, he wrote books, he established magazines. He denounced Grover Cleveland furiously, and Woodrow Wilson so insanely that during

the first World War his publications were barred from the mails. He who in his early days had fought manfully to secure decent treatment for the Negro and more than once had faced a mob and preserved its victim, eventually became a Negro-baiter of the most revolting type. He developed a phobia against Catholics and poured out scurrilities against the Roman Church. He developed another against the Jews and furnished the new Ku Klux Klan—a curious antithesis of the old one, which is supposed to have had a Catholic priest for its Grand Chaplain and a Jewish merchant for its Grand Treasurer—with much of the poisonous garbage it flung at Israel. In his latter years he suffered at least two “nervous breakdowns” which gave the charitably inclined some excuse for regarding him as mentally irresponsible. In the end when this man, who might have been a leader of Southern liberalism in the tradition of Jefferson, at last died, the principal emotion the event aroused in the minds of wise men was a sense of relief.

The story of Thomas E. Watson would be a weird and arresting tragedy if it stood alone. But it does not stand alone. It is singular only in that this man was singularly able. Not only was his natural endowment exceptionally great, but it included many of the qualities essential to the development of a statesman of the first rank.

His energy was almost boundless. His courage, physical and moral, was superb. He had the eloquence that appeals to the masses and at the same time as a writer he was master of a style that charmed the learned. He was small of stature, but his physical presence could cow a lynching

mob, yet he was capable of severe intellectual labor and his histories and biographies show some of the equipment of a scholar. He was capable, at least in his early years, of a fine disinterestedness and he never lacked either the heart or the skill to lead a forlorn hope. His failure was weakness of character, not of mentality. His furies mastered him, and his inability to control them doomed him. Yet other men of equally violent temper in a more favorable environment, and especially when in youth they have come under the tutelage of a man whom they regard as genuinely great, have learned to curb their anger and have done useful and honorable service for the world. It may be argued that from 1892 Tom Watson was hopeless; but he was not hopeless from the beginning. Somehow the South lost in him a man who certainly might have been a fine leader of his people, and perhaps a great one.

Moreover, it has happened repeatedly. The story is never the same in its details, but in the essentials of a young, liberal leader turning, under the influence of Southern politics, into something that appals the nation, it is depressingly familiar. There was, for example, James Thomas Heflin, of Alabama. He is remembered today merely as a United States Senator with an incomprehensible predilection for wasting his time and the Senate's in hour after hour of howling against the Pope. Nobody remembers Tom Heflin as ever doing anything else. Nobody knows why. There are Catholics in Alabama, but so few that, except in the larger cities, they are regarded somewhat as natural curiosities, rather like albinos and people with six fingers. Certainly it was not the Catholics who finally ejected Heflin from the Senate in 1931. It was the act of Alabama Protestants, bored beyond endurance by his ranting.

Yet there was a time when this same man was a bold, vigorous, and apparently sincere champion of human rights against property rights. Heflin's intellectual power never approached that of Tom Watson; but he was a marvelous campaign orator, he had the shrewdness to stage some notably successful fights against predatory corporations in his own State and, after coming to Washington, to be the gadfly of the Republican majority in the House. Nobody believes it was ever in the man to write a great biography; but there is no apparent reason why he might not have made a career rivaling, in other respects, that of Beveridge, of Indiana. But the strange curse of Southern liberals fell upon him, and he wandered off into the waterless desert of religious prejudice, serving no useful purpose thereafter.

James Kimble Vardaman, of Mississippi, was another who had the power to stir the masses and by their strength to overthrow an oligarchy that had ruled the State for years. Before entering politics he had been a country editor—perhaps it should be said before he became a candidate, for in the closing decade of the last and the first years of this century every Southern country editor was in politics *ex officio*, although some of them never sought office. Now if there is any man who knows, really knows, the condition of the rural dwellers, in Mississippi or any other State, it is your country editor. Vardaman knew the needs of his people and for years he was the public representative of their aspirations. Repeatedly he was beaten down by the old-line leaders, but he was indomitable, and eventually he won the Governorship and after that a seat in the Senate; but before he attained power



he seemed to have forgotten how to do anything but roar. Race prejudice, more than religious, was his specialty; and his contribution to liberalism was exactly nothing.

John Sharp Williams, of Mississippi, was a contemporary of Vardaman, as Oscar W. Underwood, of Alabama, was of Heflin. Both were conservatives, but both were men of integrity, of high ability, and of unquestionable patriotism. It is unbelievable that either would have set the interest of his class or of his faction consciously against the interest of the State. But they were lacking in one element of statesmanship. It may have been the will, or it may have been the skill that was missing, but at any rate neither ever contrived to harness the power of these popular leaders and apply it to some fruitful endeavor. Each was content to see the movement beaten down, when it could be beaten, or to avoid being trampled to death by it when it couldn't be beaten. The Tories of England are shrewder. When a Ramsay MacDonald rises against them, they do not waste time trying to whip him. Instead, they seduce him. They do not hesitate to yield him whatever he demands—except their own right to rule. There may be no more morality in this than in the Southern practice, but it makes for public order.

This is not to be construed, of course, as an assertion, or even a suggestion, that every startling politician emerging from the South in recent years was potentially a liberal leader until he was warped and distorted by his environment. It would be pretty difficult to demonstrate that Coleman Livingston Blease, of South Carolina, for example, or Jeff Davis, of Arkansas, or Eugene Talmadge, of Georgia,

had ever demonstrated anything resembling political wisdom or the capacity for statecraft.

But it is more than possible, it is so probable that it is almost a certainty that these men, ambitious politicians and nothing more, would have adopted a milder tone had not bellowing been established as the correct mode in Southern politics since the days of Ben Tillman and Tom Watson. There may be some to argue that Blease would still have been Blease had he roared "as gently . . . as 't'were any nightingale." But they are wrong. A suave, polite man might have released even more jailbirds upon the law-abiding population; he might have done even more damage to the State's educational system by foisting on it even worse text-books; he might have lasted even longer, and cost the State of South Carolina even more money; but he would not have been Blease, at least as far as the rest of the country is concerned. "To hell with the Constitution"—that is the essential part of Blease, and without it he would have been a different creature, no more moral, perhaps, but very much less of a scandal, very much less of a reason for thoughtful men to despair of democracy and for thoughtless men to hold the South in derision as semi-barbarous.

"A man may smile and smile and still be a villain," but not a ruffian, and it is an open question whether villainy is any more damaging to a democratic country than ruffianism. Admitting that as a rule ruffians, with rare exceptions such as Tillman, are to begin with or eventually become villains also, the scale seems to be weighted on that side. It is true enough that manners and ethics are forever separate, but it nevertheless remains true that when the

tone of politics was lowered to the level of a bar-room brawl, the South suffered a moral disaster. This occurred in the days of Tillman and Watson and they were responsible for part of it, perhaps half of it; but they were not altogether responsible. Those who claimed to represent the nobility and gentry had a hand in it, too. The brutality with which they undertook suppression of the agrarian revolt was a direct cause of the brutality with which they were at length over-ridden. The sober fact is that they failed in the first duty of statesmen, which is to look ahead; engrossed in seizing the advantage of the moment they ignored the future; and in so doing they rendered disservice to their country and even to their own class and caste.

But of all the apparitions that have come from below the Potomac to appal the country, none was comparable either in size or in effectiveness to that strange genius, Huey Pierce Long, of Louisiana. Here there is no question of a potentially valuable popular leader battered and warped into a demagogue by an arrogant and ruthless opposition. The only outfit that ever had power enough to deal ruthlessly with Huey was the Standard Oil Company, when it froze him out, along with a group of other small independents; and it was a mistake that cost the Standard uncounted millions when Huey reached a position where he could wreak vengeance upon it. He was, in fact, so much abler than all his opponents combined as to justify his remark to a reporter who was puzzling over a description of his attributes, "Just call me *sui generis* and let it go at that."

The old-line Democracy of Louisiana must, therefore, be acquitted at once of any responsibility for the degradation of this talent. Huey did it himself. He was born without scruples and with a taste for the flesh-pots, and he was not bent to his environment—he bent his environment to suit his fancy.

But it can hardly be denied that the bankruptcy of statecraft in Louisiana gave the man his opportunity. His famous speech under the "Evangeline oak" in Southern Louisiana was addressed to people who knew it was no rant, but only too bitterly true:

"It was here that Evangeline waited for her lover Gabriel, who never came. This oak is an immortal spot, made so by Longfellow's poem, but Evangeline is not the only one who has waited here in disappointment.

"Where are the schools that you have waited for your children to have, that have never come? Where are the roads and the highways that you spent your money to build, that are no nearer now than ever before? Where are the institutions to care for the sick and disabled? Evangeline wept bitter tears in her disappointment. But they lasted through only one lifetime. Your tears in this country, around this oak, have lasted for generations. Give me the chance to dry the tears of those who still weep here."<sup>6</sup>

The rulers of a State are responsible for its solvency and for the maintenance of public order. That is true. The political heresy of the South has not been in denying it, but in accepting the false doctrine that this is substantially all for which they are responsible. Even yet there are

<sup>6</sup> Quoted by Harnett T. Kane, in *Louisiana Hayride* (Morrow, 1941), pp. 56-57.

people in high places in the South who repudiate violently the truth that rulers are recreant to their duty unless they provide wisely for the general welfare and for an *increasing* welfare. Even yet the shibboleths of "Populism" and "Socialism"—almost abandoned recently in favor of "Communism"—are potent to make otherwise intelligent Southern leaders shy away from "laws the most wholesome and necessary for the public good," as Jefferson put it. Even yet they undertake to blast the sacrilegious politician who asserts that breeding, bravery and piety combined are not sufficient equipment for the ruler of a modern State. Therefore, even yet they are leaving fields white unto the harvest for a Huey Long.

Fortunately, the law of averages runs against the probability that we shall see his like again. Before Hitler, Huey had discovered the political maxim that the bigger the lie, the more likely it is to be believed, and before Thyssen many rich men in Louisiana had discovered that it is fatal to finance a demagogue hoping to control him later.

Exactly what the pistol of Dr. Weiss did for the country when it cut Huey Long down in 1935 no one can say, but the man had long since become more than merely a threat to Louisiana. James A. Farley, certainly a competent witness, has said that the Democratic National committee "conducted a secret poll on a national scale to find out if Huey's sales talks for his 'share the wealth' program were attracting many customers. The result of that poll, which was kept secret and shown only to a very few people, was surprising in many ways. It indicated that, running on a third-party ticket, Long would be able to poll between 3,000,000 to 4,000,000 votes for the Presi-

dency. He had about as much following in the North as in the South, and he had as strong an appeal in the industrial centers as he did in the rural areas. Even the rock-ribbed Republican State of Maine, where the voters were steeped in conservatism, was ready to contribute to Long's total in about the same percentage as other States."<sup>7</sup>

It is true that since Roosevelt won by 10,000,000 in 1936, Long's candidacy might not have changed the result, even if he had taken 4,000,000 votes from the Democrats; but is there any doubt that it would have had an appalling effect on American politics? If an American candidate, conducting a campaign of worse than Hitlerian billingsgate, had polled 4,000,000 votes, the event would have inspired, nay, galvanized, every minor blatherskite in the country into adopting similar tactics; and it might have taken years, and prodigious efforts, to drive the Gadarene swine down a steep place into the sea. Huey Long, even in defeat, might have been such a curse to the nation as Tom Watson, in defeat, was to Georgia; nor is it demonstrable that he would have stayed defeated, any more than Watson did. His removal was a national deliverance.

Let it be repeated for emphasis that Louisiana cannot be charged with sole responsibility for Huey. The man unquestionably was a genius, and had he appeared in the most progressive, best governed State in the Union it is easy to believe that he would nevertheless have made his mark and it is not beyond belief that he would have been formidable. The perversion of such ability to destructive ends was a first-class tragedy, but given the man's avarice and

<sup>7</sup> James A. Farley in *Behind the Ballots* (Harcourt, Brace, 1938), pp. 249-250.

his almost complete amorality, it may have been unavoidable.

But Louisiana was responsible for furnishing him with a dangerous armamentarium of cold, indisputable fact. Those people under the Evangeline oak were without roads. They were without schools. They were without decent public health services. They were without many of the facilities and services that a modern State must supply to its people or invite revolt. These lacks were none of Huey's lies, but matters of common knowledge. More than that, when Huey came to power, some, at least, of the wants were supplied. Their coming was attended with a saturnalia of waste and graft, but they came. It is a fact, therefore, that from the standpoint of the people under the oak, Huey told the truth and kept his promises. How, then, is anyone to convince them that he was a menace? Travelers declare that along the bayous, and up in the scrawny hill country of Louisiana to this day one hears weird legends about a reincarnation; Huey is not dead, they say, but like Barbarossa, like Arthur, is held by some strange enchantment, and one day, at the moment of his people's greatest need he will break the thrall and return once more "to dry the eyes of those who still weep here."

The South is called backward, and in the items of per capita wealth and per capita income it certainly is. The census figures prove it. Yet the census figures also show that in a curious way this backward section grips the future of the country. This is not simply a matter of the natural resources remaining for future exploitation, al-

though the South holds a large proportion of them. It applies to population, and perhaps to other things, as well.

For instance, there are now living in other sections 3,000,000 more Southerners than there are natives of other sections living in the South. This emigration is more likely to increase than to diminish, for the South is more prolific and the same time healthier than the national average, if vital statistics mean anything. In 1940 the eleven States that composed the Confederacy had a birthrate fourteen per cent higher than the average for the nation and in the same year a death rate about four and a half per cent lower than the average. Southerners live long and multiply; and as a rule such people inherit the earth.

For this reason, if for no other, the preoccupation with the manners and customs of the South that Americans in general have exhibited in recent years is not unreasonable. It was the advance of prudery that wrung from Mr. Ogden Nash the despairing lament, "We'll all be Kansas, by and by!" but if he had said, "We'll all be Georgia, by and by," he would have had some biological support for the assertion, although it might have been even more violently repudiated by a horrified populace.

Nothing Southern is without significance to the rest of the country for the South is the nursery of America. It is interesting to note that what is now true biologically was once equally true chronologically and politically. Jamestown, Mount Vernon and Monticello are all in Virginia, and for its first half century the South supplied ideas to the nation as it now supplies children. What has happened once, may happen again. If Mr. Farley really knows how to estimate votes, the South within this decade



came dangerously close to furnishing the nation with an American version of the most powerful and the most malignant political idea that the modern world has seen, the idea of Fascism. From Jefferson to Huey Long is an appalling transition, but it doesn't necessarily indicate any diminution of power. The great Southerners of the Revolution were admittedly among the strongest men in the nation. Is there any obvious reason why the region that produced them might not now produce men who are evil, but just as strong?

A liberal, therefore, need not be himself a Southerner in order to agree enthusiastically that liberal and enlightened statesmanship in this vital center, this focus of American vigor, is highly desirable from a national, as well as from a Southern, point of view. A spiritual descendant of Jefferson arising in Jefferson's own region might easily be as great a bulwark of the nation as the author of the Declaration was. Great political leadership has come out of the South, some of the greatest not in this country only, but in the world. The men who wrought the framework of this republic are no provincial heroes; their names are known in every capital and their works are taught to schoolboys in every language, except, perhaps, where the modern reversion to barbarism has stripped text-books of all political philosophy.

Therefore the men who stand in the places once occupied by such heroes are by their mere location invested with a certain national significance. When the South sends, year after year, decade after decade, generation after generation, a procession of ruffianly politicians to occupy the seats in Washington once graced by the

lordly line of statesmen running from Madison to Calhoun, the phenomenon is not exclusively the business of Georgia and Louisiana and the other States below the Potomac. We are all involved in it. To say that it is Southern is only to say that it is quintessentially American.

This is irony with more than a touch of aloes. Out of the region whence came the great declaration of eternal hostility to every form of tyranny over the mind of man, now swarm officers of government who proclaim from the housetops their own subservience to every prejudice, their pandering to every passion, their bondage to ignorance, their slavery to bigotry and fraud. But that is not all. In this motley rout are some who were not always so, but gave definite promise of developing the sort of leadership that the South needs for herself and that the nation needs for the South.

This is the crowning irony. The South being, of all sections of the country, the section most in need of liberal statesmen, and being supplied with an embryonic one, proceeds to develop him—into a Thomas E. Watson.

*Victor and Vanquished—But Who's Who?*

"HERE is a statesman who proceeded from speech to speech. His triumphs were a series of speeches and his career reminds us more of the English parliamentary system than of our own."

So one of his biographers<sup>1</sup> wrote of William Jennings Bryan. It was intended as a compliment.

"When father goes to a wedding, he wants to be the bride; when he goes to a funeral, he wants to be the corpse."

So one of his sons is reputed to have said of Theodore Roosevelt. It was doubtless intended as a sarcasm, but in a way it is a compliment.

These aspects of the two men were sufficiently conspicuous to impress their contemporaries; but now that Roosevelt has been dead more than twenty years, and Bryan more than fifteen, the pattern of history in which their lives were set grows clearer in retrospect and the oratory of Bryan and the avidity of life of Roosevelt seem less important. Other things, and especially other relations begin to emerge.

<sup>1</sup> Wayne C. Williams, *William Jennings Bryan*, p. 78.

For one thing, it is now fairly clear that Bryan was not, as was the popular belief for years, the most unsuccessful great leader in American political history. He never won a major battle, it is true; but there is good reason to believe that he never fought in an unsuccessful campaign.

This is not altogether comforting, for Bryan's last campaign was an appalling one. He ended his life battling against intellectual liberty. In 1925 he was at least temporarily checked in this country; but in 1933 the same campaign was revived abroad and prosecuted with such success that within seven years it had begun to threaten extinction of freedom of the mind, not merely in the United States, but throughout the world.

Bryan's soul would have revolted against many of Hitler's practices; but the Hitlerian doctrine that the discoveries of science must not be allowed to displace dogma is the doctrine that Bryan upheld at Dayton, Tennessee, in the last weeks of his life. It is a little chilling, then, to recall that in no other case did this man fight in a losing campaign.

Nor is the theory of the invincibility of Theodore Roosevelt much sounder, in the perspective of twenty years, than the theory of the futility of Bryan. It is true that he never lost a major battle. Even in 1912, although he was beaten for the Presidency, there is plenty of reason to believe that his objective was not to win the office, but to defeat Taft; and in that he succeeded. Certainly that was one of his objectives, so 1912 did not represent total defeat. In every other action of major importance he carried everything before him; but did he ever fight in a winning campaign?

It is doubtful. He was hailed by the public as the great Trust Buster, but none of the trusts stayed busted. He said himself that he "took" Panama; but his successors paid for it. He was regarded as the embodiment of political liberalism, but within four years after he left office his party was so completely reactionary again that he was impelled to fight and defeat it. Although he contributed to the election of the liberal Wilson, he did not support the man after the election, and had no hand in the program of liberal legislation put through by the first Wilson administration.

Theodore Roosevelt was one of the most effective popular leaders this country has ever produced. His ability to stir the enthusiasm and hold the affections of the common people has rarely been equaled. It is a little chilling, then, to remember that a leader so magnetic, so bold, so highly gifted with the power to lead Americans in whatever direction he chose, rarely, if ever, fought in a winning campaign.

The thoughtful American of 1943 looks back with something resembling stupefaction upon the days when Bryan and Roosevelt were in their glory. How could we have been so innocent? This is, no doubt, the customary attitude of the sons toward Life with Father. The older generation always seems curiously naïve. But, discounting that, there is excellent reason to believe that the alteration in American political thinking between 1900 and 1940 was more profound than the alteration between 1800 and 1900. It was in 1800 that democracy began to insist that it be taken seriously. That was the year of the election of Thomas Jefferson to the Presidency. In 1900 it was still somewhat short of the goal, it was still insisting that it be

taken seriously by the political rulers of the country. "The cure for the ills of democracy is more democracy," proclaimed Bryan.

That proclamation seemed a good deal less than self-evident in 1940. Political democracy is now taken with the utmost seriousness; but it has attained this crest only to discover that a higher crest lies beyond. Political democracy, we are learning with a disappointment too often blinded by wrath, is of small avail as long as economic autocracy continues; and the means whereby economic democracy may be established and maintained are anything but clear.

The real difference in our political thinking today and that of the turn of the century is its uncertainty. A triumphant President, going into power in 1933, leading a party which had been out of office for twelve years, could announce to the country that the program he proposed to put into effect was tentative; that if it failed, as well it might, he would be the first to acknowledge its failure and to replace it with something else. Compare that with the temper of Theodore Roosevelt in 1904, or with the temper in which Bryan conducted his campaigns in 1896, in 1900 and in 1908, and the alteration in our style of thinking is evident.

It is dangerous, therefore it is unfortunate, and perhaps it is corrupting, but it is also pleasant, to live in days when every political leader knows all the answers. The public is confused in such times, since each leader has a different answer; but when all the world assumes that it is only a question of picking the right one, life is as stimulating as a well-conducted lottery. It is when we begin to realize that

nobody knows all the answers, that perhaps there are no answers, that faith withers, desire fails and the grasshopper becomes a burden.

In the blithe years between the end of the depression that began in 1893 and the start of the World War, no such curse lay upon the United States. Taken all in all, it was perhaps the happiest time this country has ever known. The ulcer of human slavery had been cut out of the body politic and the scars of that major surgery were almost healed. The economy of mass production was beginning to produce its beneficent effects, and the pernicious ones were not yet sufficiently clearly manifest to be greatly impressive. The country was beginning to realize how gigantic was its financial and military power, a realization sharply accelerated by the brush with Spain in 1898. Industrialists and economists were beginning to guess that the age-old problem of producing, with the man power available, enough goods to satisfy demand was on the point of solution; and they did not yet clearly foresee, save for a few extraordinarily perceptive individuals, that the parallel problem of the fair distribution of the products of labor, was bound to become more troublesome in proportion as the other was solved. It was apparent that a new era was dawning, and it was not yet apparent how stormy that new era was to be. Optimism, therefore, was inevitable.

It did not, however, take the form of surface complacency in American political life. On the contrary, rarely have the prophets of doom been more voluble and their jeremiads more tremendous, rising in a crescendo of commination until the unforgotten day when Bryan fairly exhausted the resources of oburgation by accusing the

Republican party of plotting to press a crown of thorns on labor's brow and to crucify mankind upon a cross of gold. Bishop Ernulphus himself could pronounce no mightier curse; and it was all because the Republicans stubbornly refused to admit the advantages of bimetallism.

Men could not have become so exercised over a monetary theory had they not cherished in their hearts the optimistic belief that the adoption of the right monetary theory would solve most of our economic problems. We have no such faith today. In that, perhaps we are wiser than were our fathers in 1896; but perhaps we are merely unhappier. We know that the free coinage of silver at the ratio of 16 to 1 will not avail to cure our ills; we know that the Square Deal advocated by Theodore Roosevelt would not be enough. We no longer have the confidence in anything that, in those days, every political leader had in his own pet theory—a confidence that his followers shared. Perhaps we are wiser; but most certainly we are unhappier.

The contrast, however, lends a certain charm to study of the personalities of the two men who dominated the political scene for many years. This effect is confined to their personalities; for there are few studies less charming than an attempt to untangle, understand, and assess their ideas. It is not any lack of intellectual alertness or vigor that makes study of their political philosophy pointless and dull, but simply that a shifting environment has removed many of the premises on which they based their arguments. The anti-imperialism of Bryan, for example, was presented shrewdly and powerfully, and it retains a certain validity to this day, but not in the form in which it was originally presented. Bryan was speaking to what he believed to be



an expansionist public; but surely no one today would seriously accuse the American people of desiring territorial expansion. The danger is, rather, that by too sudden a contraction we may expose an Achilles' heel, especially in the Far East.

The strenuosity of Theodore Roosevelt has undergone an analogous deterioration. It never was mere athleticism, as a great many of his fellow countrymen believed, and it has validity for our own times in its real meaning, but hardly in the form in which it was presented. Roosevelt spoke to a nation in which power, especially economic power, was being frankly and openly seized by the aggressive, and he feared that intellectual and spiritual, rather than physical, apathy might result in the establishment of an unadmitted but very real form of slavery for the masses. Today the struggle is against foreign military conquerors, rather than against the acquisitive element in our own population, so stentorian calls to resistance of the encroaching power of the rich are somewhat pointless. The American proletariat, indeed, for the last ten years has been living an extremely strenuous life, politically; a decade that culminated in the election by the proletariat, against the combined opposition of agriculture, industry and finance, of a President and a Congress.

Of what significance, as a guide to the future, are the battles that Bryan and Roosevelt waged over the tariff? At the moment, even as recent a development as Mr. Cordell Hull's reciprocal trade treaties seems already as obsolescent as the cross bow in view of the development of the system of quotas and barter trade, with the threat of state control of all foreign commerce.

But if the issues over which they struggled now seem curiously faint and far away, the personal qualities by which these men dominated their times have lost neither significance nor power. Roosevelt as insurgent, Bryan as theologian, may not interest this generation, nor have much to tell it of insurgency or theology; but Bwana Tumba and the Peerless Leader are immortal, for the qualities in them that made men follow them are still potent to move the race, and in other men, of other names, debating other issues they will still be formidable. No one cares two straws now for the recall of judicial decisions, but the quality that made a Wall Street banker, such as George W. Perkins, sing "Onward Christian Soldiers" in praise of a politician is a quality still to be reckoned with.

Roosevelt's career was somewhat atypical. He came into national prominence in the fashion of John Tyler, as an example of the disastrous mischances that may follow a politician's miscalculation. But William Jennings Bryan's progress to the heights was so profoundly American that it is almost suspect. One feels that the thing is too perfect and instinctively looks for some sort of stage management, some catch in the story, somewhere. It is not a Horatio Alger story. It is nothing so dramatic. Horatio Alger pictured a career as Americans would have it. William J. Bryan made a career as millions of Americans would have made it had they been endowed with his energy, perspicuity and good fortune. Roosevelt was an American of a highly specialized breed. Bryan was an average American, greatly magnified.

He was the earlier entrant upon the field, although Roosevelt was two years his senior. Bryan was running for

President of the United States while Roosevelt was yet buried deep in the jungle of office holders in New York as a Police Commissioner. He lived six years longer than Roosevelt, and whereas the Rough Rider was pretty well lost to public view in the tremendous events attending the close of the World War, Bryan up to the moment of his death was thundering at the gates of a citadel and causing consternation in high places. He was no longer operating in politics, it is true, but he was operating prodigiously; politicians may have been paying him little heed in 1925, but there was not a university in America, and few in the world, where his name did not arouse wrath and in most of them it aroused terror, as well.

Yet this portent that was to shake the grip upon the country of the most powerful political machine ever organized, this apparition that was to shatter the complacency of the academic world, was in the beginning one of the most unremarkable young men it is possible to imagine. Thoroughly American in that his blood carried many mingled strains—Irish, Dutch, German, English, and Scotch—he neither suffered the early hardships of Lincoln and Andrew Jackson, nor enjoyed the advantages of John Quincy Adams and Theodore Roosevelt. He had the sort of education possessed by hundreds of thousands of Americans who have attended the small colleges strewn thickly across the continent—that is to say, not very good, nor conspicuously bad. He topped it off with a professional education in a law school run on a commercial basis but not by any means disreputable. He hung out his shingle as a lawyer back in the old college town, and had no more success than the average young attorney, but, like the

average, eventually began to pick up a little business. In view of his later career it is interesting to note that his first client was a saloonkeeper for whom he collected an account amounting to \$2.60, for which he was paid a fee of 50 cents.

His people for generations had been Baptists but, after observing the rite of baptism by total immersion, he swung away from that sect and became a Presbyterian. When his law practice showed signs of passing a thousand dollars a year, he married a nice girl, to whom he was completely faithful for the rest of his days and who made him an admirable wife. A little later a college friend, who had gone to Nebraska, showed him a promising opening in Lincoln, and he removed to that city in 1887.

Up to this point Bryan was to be distinguished from ten thousand other American youths of his generation—he was born in 1860—in one way only; he could out-talk most of his competitors. If this seems faint praise, it is only because we view it from the standpoint of the twentieth century, which is a period of oratorical decline. Bryan, on the other hand, grew up in the Golden Age of talk, in the years when such men as Wendell Phillips, Henry Ward Beecher and Robert G. Ingersoll could not only live by a silver tongue, but actually wielded national power by force of eloquence.

It would be surprising to find an American sophomore today writing to his sweetheart, "Do not laugh when he tells you that he desires to stand with Webster and Clay," but it was natural enough in Bryan's college days. It was the audacity of his aspiration that he feared would excite her laughter, not the peculiarity of his choice of heroes. To have wished to stand with Jefferson and Lincoln he

would have regarded as by no means so daring a flight of ambition, for it was the fashion to regard many of Webster's orations as surpassing the Gettysburg Address, and even the lumbering periods of Clay were preferred to Jefferson's First Inaugural, while the Declaration of Independence was not even listed among the eloquent utterances of history.

Bryan apparently was not invariably successful in his platform appearances in the early years, but the frequency of his triumphs increased steadily and he ended his college career the undisputed champion. He practiced assiduously and intelligently. He had an excellent ear for the rhythms of English prose, even the intricate and subtle ones; as he grew older it became apparent that he had marvelous physical equipment. Even as a youth he was tall and powerful, and as he matured he developed a tremendous thorax. His head was fine—the mouth perhaps a little too thin-lipped, but wide and mobile; the larynx and nasal passages must have been superb, for they produced tones in the middle register of such clarity and resonance as are hardly heard once in a century. Bryan had no need of the mechanical gadgets that are the reliance of the modern orator. Many men still living have heard him address thirty thousand people in the open air, easily making himself understood on the outskirts of the crowd, yet without screaming, indeed, apparently without effort.

In Lincoln he found himself in an environment in which his gifts were especially valuable. In 1887 it was a post-pioneer country. There was one last raid of hostile Indians after the Bryans arrived in Nebraska, but the task before the State was consolidation, rather than conquest. Possibly the true pioneer was a silent man of action, but the settler

immediately behind the pioneer emphatically was a man of words. The mid-continental valley is not conspicuously silent today, but it is positively taciturn by comparison with the flood of discourse that it produced between the Civil War and the turn of the century. All the way from Altgeld to Sockless Jerry Simpson, every style of eloquence, or at least elocution, was represented in the West of those days. The Populist movement was not, as cynics aver, born of talk and fed exclusively upon wind, but it either produced or attracted a bewildering array of the best talkers of the period.

Hence the arrival in Lincoln of an additional talker and an exceptionally gifted one was as manna from heaven to the harassed and despairing Democrats of the Congressional district. In the election of 1888 they were beaten by a majority of 3,400. In 1890, therefore, the Democratic nomination could not have been worth much, and its gift to the new arrival is perhaps less expressive of the impression he had made than of the desperation of the Democratic leaders. Be that as it may, they were justified by the event. Candidate Bryan went out into the highways and the byways, talking constantly, talking to individual voters, talking to knots of loafers at country post offices, talking to assemblages in the villages on Saturday afternoons, making set speeches whenever and wherever a crowd could be assembled. He talked well. Indeed, he talked enchantingly. He talked himself into election, and not only that, but into a majority of 6,573!

He stayed in Congress four years, and then lost his seat in an effort to reach the United States Senate. It was not a disastrous defeat, however. The panic of 1893 had wrecked

the Democrats, and it is doubtful that any Democrat could have held the district in 1894. In any event, Bryan withdrew, staking his chances on a Democratic Legislature—Senators, of course, were not then elected directly by the people—so when the Legislature was lost, he went down in the general ruin.

Even so, he avoided obliteration under the landslide. In 1892 Populism was running so strong in Nebraska that Bryan, although a candidate for Congress on the Democratic ticket, found it expedient to support Weaver, the Populist candidate for President. This was done, it is said,<sup>2</sup> by instructions from Democratic headquarters issued on the theory that since the State was obviously lost to the national ticket, it would be senseless to lose a Congressman, too. If such instructions were issued, however, they did little violence to Bryan's personal preferences, for he had no liking whatever for Grover Cleveland, the Democratic candidate, and before the end of that term he was violently assailing the President. Therefore, when the Democratic party crashed, Bryan was more or less clear of the wreck.

From 1894 to 1896 he was busy not, perhaps, actually fomenting the discontent in the West, but certainly shaping it and forging it into a formidable political weapon. At Memphis and again at Chicago he attended great meetings at which the opposition to the Eastern control of the Democratic party was strongly organized. He took so prominent a part that it was easy to secure for him a place in the discussion of the platform at the national Democratic convention in 1896.

To a generation so hard-pressed that at times it grows

<sup>2</sup>By Wayne C. Williams in his biography of Bryan, p. 89.

doubtful of the survival of American institutions, the outrages against which Bryan inveighed seem rather trivial. Nobody was threatening to invade the West, nobody was plotting to subvert its institutions, or to deprive its people of their civil rights, or to impose upon them a political and social philosophy manufactured elsewhere. The West stood in no danger of having Jews exterminated, its books burned, its universities closed, its newspapers censored and its churches regulated. None of the penalties now laid upon a dominated people were held over the heads of the men and women of the West; but they were nonetheless in uproarious rebellion.

Their money was being taken from them by what they deemed unfair practices. Of course, nobody was laying fines upon their cities and exacting forced contributions from their rich individuals; but the laws framed in Washington, as the West believed, tended to drain the wealth of the section into the coffers of New York and other Eastern centers. The West, an undeveloped region, had need of enormous capital to enable it to exploit its resources; that capital was furnished by the East, and by foreigners on terms as favorable to themselves as the lenders could contrive. The panic of 1893 and the depression that followed it made these terms much more onerous than they had been in more prosperous times. Every debtor country felt the pinch of hard times, and was more or less discontented.

Not the West only, but a large part of the rest of the country as well attributed the economic difficulties largely, if not exclusively, to a defective monetary system, the most conspicuous defect being, in their opinion, the demonetiza-



tion of silver. The remedy, therefore, was bimetallism. William McKinley, who was to be the Republican candidate against Bryan in 1896, was originally a supporter of bimetallism, and the theory had numerous advocates, even in Grover Cleveland's own State of New York. The doctrine was most generally and most fervently accepted, however, in the debtor regions of the West and South.

President Cleveland was a man of uncompromising honesty, but of limited imagination, and of even more limited knowledge of the country. To his mind bimetallism was simply an indirect method of debasing the currency, and its advocates he held not much better than the coin clippers of an earlier century. He lacked the imagination to perceive that millions of men as honest as he was accepted it, not as a means of avoiding their just debts, but as a means of making more just and equitable a banking and currency system whose clumsiness and rigidity did implement the greed of lenders and aggravate the distresses of borrowers. That it was a method of doubtful utility had no bearing on the integrity of its proponents, but this Cleveland did not, and probably could not, take into consideration. The truth is, no one was offering at the time a program of currency and banking reform extensive enough and thorough enough to remedy the conditions that were subjecting the debtor regions to injustice and extortion. The silver people did, however, offer a measure; inadequate it certainly was, unsound it probably was, but it was nevertheless an effort to strike at a real evil. Cleveland, perceiving its inadequacy and probable unsoundness, did not perceive his own duty as a national leader to offer in its place measures that were adequate and sound; nor did he perceive the honesty of a

great many men who had supported the one positive program that was offered. He therefore developed a tremendous moral fervor in his opposition to the free and unlimited coinage of silver. Although he referred specifically to dramshops and gambling dens, it is certainly easy to believe that he may have had in mind also its advocacy of what he considered a debased currency when he described the West as acquiring "a character and disposition which, while dangerous to peace and order in the early stages of settlement, develop into badly regulated municipalities, corrupt and unsafe Territories, and undesirable States."

But the injection of moral fervor into a political discussion is nothing less than God's gift to an orator, for moral fervor is the very stuff of which oratory is made. Bryan seized it with avidity. When he arrived at Chicago to make the unforgotten speech, he faced an audience that was not merely in disagreement with the monetary policy of the Administration, but had come to believe that the Administration regarded the West with arrogant contempt and was frankly and blatantly in the service of the money-lenders of the East.

Within recent years, as the dust of old conflicts has settled, it has become plain to the dullest that the two most important constituents of Cleveland's character—important, that is, in his role of statesman—were a massive courage and a massive honesty. He simply could not bend, either for profit or from fear. One of the notable ironies of our political history is the fact that this man was once regarded by millions of his fellow countrymen as an obsequious and subservient flunkey of the great Eastern bankers. Yet this opinion was, in some part, created by Cleveland himself.

One hesitates to say that it was his fault. Is it a man's fault if he is born without the imaginative sympathy that enables one to understand points of view widely different from one's own? Fault is too harsh a word. It is, rather, the misfortune of those who lack understanding that they are always misunderstood.

At any rate, he was delivered into the hands of Bryan. The organ tones of that great voice soared into heights of eloquence never before heard in an American political convention. The orator enraptured and ensorcelled his audience, swept them away, up from the solid earth, out of the atmosphere, into rarefied regions where the real and the ideal, essence and substance, noumena and phenomena, were so mixed and confounded that it was possible for him to portray brave and honest old Cleveland as a merger of Annas, Caiphas and Pontius Pilate, raising upon some unidentified Golgotha a cross of gold. And nobody laughed.

On the contrary, the West rose with a fanatical delight reminiscent of the fury of the legions of Islam when the green standard first was hoisted and Amru, the war chief, swept across the world to the Pillars of Hercules. Mark Hanna, possibly the cleverest American politician between Martin Van Buren and Franklin D. Roosevelt, all but met his Waterloo that year; the desperate expedients to which he was put to squeeze through are a part of American political history. As it was, Bryan received 47 per cent of the popular vote and McKinley 51 per cent, about 2 per cent being thrown away on minor candidates.

There was not much that was Jovian about the Senator from Ohio, but it is undeniable that from the headache of

Mark Hanna it was that Bryan, Minerva-like, sprang full-panoplied into the arena of American national politics.

Lord Charnwood's life of Theodore Roosevelt may be open to criticism on various grounds, but it has one sentence that cuts deeper, perhaps, than the author intended, or even suspected. This is the sentence: "Deeply did he distrust any ideas of progress which are founded in disparagement of older moralities."

This is Charnwood's rather mealy-mouthed reference to Roosevelt's thundering against birth control, which was just beginning to be advocated seriously in Roosevelt's day, and which the President dismissed contemptuously as mere "race suicide." But although it was intended to apply to only one facet of his character, it is really an illuminating description of the whole man.

He did distrust any ideas of progress that involved disparagement of the older moralities; nor was this attitude by any means confined to sexual morality. One of the older moralities in which Theodore Roosevelt believed fervently and profoundly was the morality of the sacredness of private property. Another was the morality for which the British have invented a succinct description in the phrase "the old school tie." Another was the morality which has recently been brought conspicuously to the fore in Germany under the interesting, if obscure, phrase, "strength through joy." In short, he was basically a thoroughly conventional man; he amazed and bewildered his contemporaries because he presented the anomaly of a man who was at once profoundly conventional and highly intelligent. So firmly convinced is the world that a man

to Roosevelt all sorts of characters which he did not possess. At one time or another, in one quarter or another, he was called a radical, a reactionary, a demagogue, a sophist and a crook. He was none of these things. He was merely a realistic conservative; but so rare is realism among conservatives that his true quality was not recognized until his life was ended.

It is difficult, indeed, to see how he could have been anything else. To the extent that we have an aristocracy of birth in America, Theodore Roosevelt was of the aristocracy. His people had had money for generations. True, they were never numbered among the "filthily rich." The name of Roosevelt has never been bracketed with that of Astor, or Vanderbilt, or Rockefeller, or Du Pont. The Roosevelt name has never connoted multiplied millions, but neither has it ever been bracketed with Jukes, or Joad. The Roosevelts were canny New York Dutchmen, too shrewd ever to go bankrupt, perhaps too cautious ever to become multi-millionaires. They were thrifty and industrious; but thrift and industry persisting through generations brought them to a financial level attained by few Americans and by few people in any country.

To do them justice, they have exhibited another characteristic through many generations—they have been decent people. The record does not disclose any conspicuously saintly character among them, it is true—not one faintly resembling Francis of Assisi, or Serra Junípero, or even Roger Williams—but on the other hand it is remarkably free of evidences of paranoia, megalomania and satyriasis. Solid is the word for the Roosevelts; for centuries they have been regarded—well, say they had been, up to 1933

—as sound, rather than fascinating, as trustworthy, rather than inspiring.

Theodore's father was a typical Roosevelt. Never a poor man, he was yet not so rich that he deemed it unnecessary to work for a living. But he was capable and he increased his patrimony steadily, although not spectacularly; and at the time of his death it was sufficiently large to support all his children in comfort, although not in luxury. Before his death he informed his son, Theodore, that the young man need never follow any profession for a living, provided he avoided expensive amusement, and the father would be content for the son to live on his income on condition that he devoted his life to something worth doing, although unremunerative. Shamefully little attention has been paid to this bequest of the elder Roosevelt, certainly one of the wisest in American history and, considering its fruits, one of the most significant.

A man so endowed, however, was not a typical American. Very few citizens of the republic have either a competence sufficient to relieve them of the necessity of working, or a stimulus so direct and powerful to devote their leisure to the public good. Nor was this all; Theodore Roosevelt was atypical in another way. In youth and early manhood he suffered severely from asthma at a time when immunology was hardly even in its infancy. The condition was so bad, indeed, during his boyhood that ordinary schooling was impractical and he was educated at home by tutors. As far as the acquisition of book learning was concerned, this may have been an advantage, rather than a handicap, but it drew a line of demarcation

between him and ordinary American youth in addition to the line already drawn by his possession of wealth.

Finally, he was set apart in yet a third way. His father, following the best medical advice available at the time, when allergy and anaphylaxis were not even words in the dictionary, believed that asthma was somehow a manifestation of bodily weakness and was susceptible of elimination by development of the striated muscles. He therefore constantly incited his son to vigorous physical exercise. Strangely enough, it did not kill him and, as is not uncommon, as the body matured the symptoms of asthma decreased in violence. Of course the young man attributed his improved health to his exercises, and for the remainder of his life was a devotee of the cult of "fitness." As President of the United States he delighted in urging it upon his associates, in all good faith and with the best of intentions; but in view of what later advances in medical science have revealed, one wonders how many eminent citizens Theodore Roosevelt sent to an untimely grave by his insistence upon subjecting their bodies to undue strain.

Taking into account all the circumstances surrounding Theodore Roosevelt's birth and upbringing, his subsequent career is worthy of high praise, almost unstinted praise; but those same circumstances account in large measure, if not entirely, for the singular impermanence of the reforms he instituted and for the evanescent nature of his fame. They account for the fact that his great rival, while he was far less successful during his life, may endure longer in the memory of America.

Theodore Roosevelt, born in 1858, graduated from Harvard in 1880 after a reputable, but not especially distin-

guished career, cherished ambitions to be a naturalist. There was a strain of seriousness in him that forbade him to dismiss lightly his father's admonition that he should make his life of some service to the world. Receiving no great encouragement in his scientific aspirations, he turned to politics, disregarding the prevalent opinion in his social class that politics was a dirty business and no career for a gentleman. He joined the Republican organization in his legislative district, no doubt to the intense amusement of the practical politicians therein. But presently Joe Murray, the reigning boss, found a use for the young aristocrat; Joe was at the moment engaged in a feud with his superior, and it occurred to him that the Big Chief would be annoyed by the nomination of the young bluestocking for the office of member of the Legislature from that district. Accordingly, the thing was done; but the Big Chief knew a thing or two himself. Instead of raging, he smilingly accepted young Roosevelt and sent him to Albany with his blessing.

At the State Capital the new delegate fully justified all Joe Murray's fondest hopes. He raised hell. But at the moment it suited the program of the Republican organization to have a member who was a conspicuous hell-raiser, so Roosevelt, instead of being disciplined, was sent back again, and yet again. By the end of the third session he had established a reputation as a recalcitrant. One of his most conspicuous achievements was a statute strengthening the merit system in various cities, and this gave him a certain standing as a municipal reformer—a reputation which was to suit the purposes of the organization a few years later.

In 1884 he came to one of the crises of his career. By



that time he had pretty well exhausted his usefulness to Joe Murray and all the other bosses in the New York Assembly. About the same time he had exhausted the Assembly's usefulness to him. If a real political career was to be made, it was time to seek a wider field. His withdrawal from the Assembly, therefore, suited all concerned, and he turned his attention toward national affairs with his selection as a delegate to the Republican National Convention of 1884.

He made an excellent start with a violent campaign against the nomination of James G. Blaine for President of the United States, but the machine, blinded by arrogance, flattened the opposition with the organization steam roller, and the suicidal nomination was made. Still, up to this point Roosevelt's record was irreproachable. He had been defeated, it was true, but he had gone down fighting in company with the most reputable element of the Republican party. After the convention, though, he made one of his rare tactical errors—after the convention he not only accepted the nomination, but supported Blaine with sufficient vigor to draw widespread attention to that support.

This was bad business. Roosevelt had plenty of arguments to support his course, to be sure. As long as he was a free agent, he had opposed Blaine, both before and in the convention; but he had accepted election as a delegate, which meant that he went to the convention as an avowed party man, bound to accept the decision of the convention. This was all very well, but it didn't alter that fact that he was supporting the sort of man that no Roosevelt could afford to support. The family had always liked to win, and so did Theodore; in his later career he was to proceed to

some extraordinary lengths, and to become allied with some very doubtful associates, in order to win; but his severest critics have to admit that he drew the line at consorting with an out-and-out crook. James G. Blaine was charged with something perhaps not more immoral, but certainly much more crass than political sharp practice. He was charged with selling the influence of the office of Speaker of the House, and selling it, not for preferment, nor for power, but for cash.

Americans are, to put it delicately, pretty tolerant toward politicians. When a man intrusted with high office prostitutes that office to advance the interest of his party, the public is not deeply shocked. The average man really expects nothing else. If a politician prostitutes his office to serve his own ambition, by securing his advancement to a higher, or more desirable office, still there is not likely to be any great hue-and-cry raised against him. But when it comes to using his office to line his own pockets, that is a little too much, even for American tolerance; the offender may not be sent to jail, but he is definitely black-listed as far as the great offices of State are concerned.

James G. Blaine was the first man ever nominated for President by either of the two major parties concerning whose financial honor there was even a question. A question had been raised about Grant, but not until after he had been elected the second time. Of course, Blaine had never been convicted, or even indicted. It is probable that he kept on the safe side of the law throughout; but there is no doubt that he made a lot of money speculating in the stocks of corporations that were materially affected by legislation before the House while Blaine was speaker.

There was an evil smell about Blaine's financial deals and the whole world knew it. Yet Theodore Roosevelt supported this man.

Blaine was beaten and Roosevelt suddenly quit politics, and even the State of New York for a time. Perhaps there was no connection between the two events, but if there wasn't there should have been. Roosevelt had plenty of reason to be ashamed of himself. But there is little reason to doubt that what drove him from his usual haunts was the double blow of the death of his mother, closely followed by that of his first wife, to both of whom he was devoted. At any rate, he went to North Dakota and played at being a cattleman for two years.

He lost his shirt, of course. Fortunately for him it was not his only shirt, and his Western adventure did not cripple him seriously, or permanently. He was no more fitted, by nature or by training, to be a cattleman than he was to sing the title role of "Tosca," but although the adventure cost him money, it was far from being a net loss. In those two years he acquired experience worth more to him than the money he dropped. He came into contact for the first time with men whom circumstances had rendered both hard and self-reliant. The Bad Lands of North Dakota, in which his ranch was located, then lived up to their name. It was as tough a region as existed on the continent. But the life produced, along with a bewildering variety of scoundrels, a few men who were bold, strong and resourceful and who by slow degrees first dominated and then civilized the country.

For these men Roosevelt conceived an extravagant admiration. It was probably inevitable that he should, since

every predisposing factor thrust him in that direction. His history was that of a weakling who had developed into a strong man due probably to obscure changes in his body chemistry as he matured but, as he believed, due to his adoption of the strenuous life, which was the sort of life the Westerners perforce lived. His had been a sheltered existence; even the ordinary experience of ordinary schools had been denied him, so he had no early experience of the tough small boy. Harvard had given him its gloss and he had stepped at once into the enjoyment of a comfortable income, so he was the very antithesis of the self-made man, subject, therefore, to the attraction of opposites when he found himself in a community of men altogether self-made. If he tended to romanticize them almost beyond recognition, what else could be expected? It was the effect the West had on a series of young Harvard men, and at least one of them, Owen Wister, embalmed the concept in the amber of a tale of romantic love, which gave the country for forty years as poisonously false an idea of the West as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had given it of the South.

Roosevelt had the type of mind that was capable of accepting both *The Virginian* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as realism. The cynical will instantly assume that this is equivalent to branding him as a fool, but it isn't. The romanticist may be an idiot, of course, and not infrequently he is; but not always. Theodore Roosevelt was a thorough-going romanticist, but he who would call him a fool only demonstrates his own folly. Roosevelt's acceptance of a romantic concept of the West—and of a great many other things, too, later in life—was due to two negative factors. In the first place, he lacked the sort of experience that

could have made him understand the realities of Western existence. He did understand its physical side. He knew, because he shared, the hardships, the toil, the dangers, and the deprivations of frontier life. But he did not know, and he could not know, one of its most important phases, which was the fear that spurred most of the men who were his contemporaries. This was the fear of poverty, from which Roosevelt, as a comparatively rich man, was free. He knew the fear of death, whether from heat and thirst, or from cold and storm, or from grizzlies, or from two-gun men, and he knew how to face it down. But the fear that alters men's characters far more profoundly than fear of death, the fear that never ceases, day or night, the fear of want, he did not know; and in the second place, he lacked the unusual power of imagination that might have replaced experience, and that did replace it in such popular leaders as Jefferson and Gladstone, who also inherited wealth. Because he omitted this immensely important factor, many of Roosevelt's psychological estimates exhibit a curious air of unreality, and many of his policies failed of effect.

It is perilously easy, however, to hold Roosevelt's personality too lightly. He was a sham as a cattleman and a sham as a Westerner, but that is far from proof that he was a sham as a man. Whatever else he may have lacked, he did have courage, physical and moral, and he did have endurance. These qualities the West respected. To them he added generosity and high spirits, and these qualities the West loved. The result was that, although his business venture was a failure, and although he never acquired or understood the point of view of poor men, he established an astonishing number of friendships that, instead of soon

passing away, deepened and strengthened through the years, many of them developing into passionate, blind devotion. No sham man ever did that.

By 1886, however, the game was becoming pretty stale and in that year an opportunity was presented at home. It was not much of an opportunity, from the standpoint of the average politician; it was, in fact, nothing more than an opportunity to be served up as a burnt offering in the interest of the Republican party. Henry George, the single-taxer, had set up a reform party in the city of New York and was running for Mayor. Sound businessmen regarded George as crazy, but nobody regarded him as corrupt, and in view of the foulness of the government that Tammany had been giving the city, the reformer made such tremendous headway that Tammany was scared into putting up a decent candidate, Abram S. Hewitt.

With a strong independent ticket in the field, and with Tammany offering an honest man, the Republican nomination obviously was of no use whatever to a politician who really hoped to win, but to a young man who cared less about winning than about getting back into the political game after two years' absence, it might be very useful indeed. Roosevelt accepted it blithely and during the campaign raised enough dust to attract some attention to himself although, at the polls, he came in third. It was about what he had expected, though, so he was in no way cast down. He married again and started writing another book—he had already produced his *Naval War of 1812*. Within the next two years he produced his biographies of Benton and Gouverneur Morris, his *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail* and his *Essays in Practical Politics*; more than that he

wrote most of the first two volumes of *The Winning of the West*, his most popular work and still a highly readable book, although as history it should be accepted with caution. With all this, he staged a highly successful comeback, and when the Republicans won the national election of 1888 he was recognized as one of the party's bright young men, for whom something should be done.

Benjamin Harrison did it by placing him on the national Civil Service Commission. It was a position admirably suited to Roosevelt's talents, because it called for little imagination but a great deal of courage and vigor. Here was nothing disparaging any of the old moralities; all he had to do was to enforce the rules of common honesty against venomous, but rather stuffy opposition. He did it well. For years Washington remembered with delight the way the young Commissioner punctured and deflated a number of windy Senators. He was so good at it, in fact, that Grover Cleveland kept him in the office when the Democrats returned to power, and he remained there until 1895.

Then he accepted perhaps the most curious appointment of his career—that of Police Commissioner of New York City. This, too, was a post suited to his talents and had he held it for a long time he might have revolutionized the police force; as it was, he made a great deal of noise, ejected not a few villains, and did much toward re-establishing morale, as well as adding somewhat to his own fame. But in 1897, with the Republicans back in power, he returned to Washington, this time as Assistant Secretary of the Navy—a post that seems to be a lucky one for

Roosevelts, since two of the family have held it before proceeding to the White House.

In Theodore's case, however, it did not last long, for with the outbreak of the war with Spain, nothing could have chained him to a desk. With Leonard Wood, an army doctor turned combatant, he raised a regiment of volunteer cavalry, the famous "Rough Riders," and served with them, first under Wood, and then as Colonel in his own right.

Some of Roosevelt's critics have chosen to sneer at this adventure as absurd. It was romantic, without a doubt. Perhaps it was fantastic, but there was nothing absurd about it. In the first place there is plenty of evidence, the testimony of sober, unemotional military men, that he was a good commander—not the combination of Marlborough, Napoleon and Stonewall Jackson that some of his idolators thought him, of course, but comparing very favorably indeed with other colonels of cavalry. In the second place, Roosevelt was forty years old at the time and it is beyond belief that he did not realize that he had an excellent chance of stopping a bullet, and an even better chance of dying of yellow fever or typhoid. But he was in a peculiar position. Throughout his public career he had been noisily advocating the strenuous life, trumpeting about the duty of every manful man to disregard personal danger. He felt that he had to put up or shut up—make good his words or else forever hold his peace. In brief, he felt that his future influence was at stake, and its preservation was worth the risk. It was exactly the reasoning that sent Alexander Hamilton to face the pistol of Burr, although in this case it had a happier outcome.



Roosevelt returned from the war so much of a national hero as to be a political asset too valuable to be ignored by old Tom Platt, Republican boss of New York, who promptly made him Governor. The Easy Boss had some mental reservations about the Rough Rider, and exacted a promise from the candidate that Platt should always be consulted before anything was done at Albany. The promise, according to Charnwood, was faithfully kept; but the Governor, after duly consulting Platt, frequently did as he pleased. In any event, the arrangement was not altogether successful from Platt's point of view; so in 1900 the boss was casting about for some way of eliminating Roosevelt gracefully and painlessly.

Possibly Matthew Quay, boss of Pennsylvania, originated the idea, for without doubt he helped put it through; but whoever devised it, it was, while seeming to be perfect, in fact one of the most disastrous miscalculations ever made by a machine politician. The plot was to make Governor Roosevelt Vice President of the United States. The nomination was an honor that he could not well refuse, but Platt and Quay were happily certain that once he was elected Vice President the man would never be heard of again. On the record, it seemed a logical idea; but even political bosses are not wise enough to predict what madmen will do. Roosevelt was duly put on the ticket with McKinley, and Bryan was duly beaten again, this time by 860,000 instead of 560,000; but then came the anarchist Czolgosz with a pistol, and in September, 1901, Roosevelt, instead of being shelved forever, was President of the United States.

For the next eighteen years, up to Roosevelt's death in 1919, two men, he and Bryan, were never out of mind again. It mattered little whether they held office or not—indeed, Bryan was never elected to any office other than Representative and held only one by appointment—their influence counted. When Roosevelt was out of office his opinions still counted for more than those of any other private citizen, Bryan alone excepted. Bryan's power to sway the minds of the voters certainly did not increase, and probably waned, when he entered President Wilson's Cabinet.

With singular consistency they maintained through these years the roles they had in the beginning—Bryan the defeated, Roosevelt the winner. In 1904 Bryan was not even nominated, and Roosevelt slaughtered the eminently respectable, but hopelessly dull Judge Parker. In 1908 Bryan suffered the humiliation of being beaten by proxy; Roosevelt was not in the race, but his man, Taft, beat Bryan almost, although not quite, as badly as Roosevelt had beaten Parker. Four years later the situation was technically reversed—Bryan's candidate beat Roosevelt. But it was only a technical reversal, for Roosevelt achieved at least half a triumph in seeing Taft thrown out of power. The election of 1912 is not enough to invalidate the general statement that in political life Roosevelt steadily won and Bryan as steadily lost.

But now that both men have been in the grave for many years it is a question whether the consistent winner was in fact as significant a figure as the consistent loser. Some of the Rooseveltian triumphs unquestionably were Pyrrhic

victories and the political philosophy which he represented is certainly not now in the ascendant.

A salient personality is never easy to fit into the pattern of the times. This is conspicuously true of Roosevelt, who was not only vigorous, but many-faceted. He was so fascinating in many of his nonessential manifestations that the policies he represented are obscured. For instance, the fact that he called Ernest Thompson Seton (or Seton-Thompson, as the case may be) a "nature-faker" has no bearing whatever on his influence on the political history of the United States. His consignment of numerous grave and dignified citizens to "the Ananias Club," his alteration of the unofficial title of certain big businessmen from "captains of industry" to "malefactors of great wealth," his description of the ideal foreign policy, "speak softly and carry a big stick," and his sonorous proclamation at the start of the Progressive party campaign, "we stand at Armageddon and we battle for the Lord," actually reveal nothing of the man save that he had a lively imagination, humor, and the courage to be forthright in his utterance.

But they made a tremendous impression, all the deeper because the country had not had a lively and picturesque President since Lincoln. Grover Cleveland was a strong man, but no one ever accused him of being lively; and McKinley, Harrison, Arthur, Garfield, Hayes and Grant, whatever their virtues, were anything but picturesque. The fact is that, at least since the exit of bullheaded, tormented old Andrew Johnson, the Presidents had been pretty stodgy. For thirty-five years—that is to say, for a full generation—the Presidents had bored the country. Roosevelt didn't. O. Henry called him "the Great Dis-

pleasure in the White House"; some gave him lordly and even saintly titles, and some gave him unprintable ones; but nobody called him a bore. For seven years he entertained the country magnificently, even if he exasperated it half the time, and the country was grateful. After he left office he contrived to keep things stirred up. The reign of Theodore I almost deserves the encomium of the Scottish sergeant of 1940 on the Narvik campaign; "There was never a dull moment."

However, it must not be forgotten that throughout his public career Roosevelt faced powerful opposition. Even at the height of his power, in 1904, when Bryan was not in the race, he received only 56 per cent of the total vote cast, which is just about the percentage received by the second Roosevelt in the third, and least successful, of his campaigns. There were those who were not amused, and although they belonged to widely separated classes, in general they rallied around Bryan.

For he, too, was a salient personality, with idiosyncrasies so conspicuous that they mask the essentials of his philosophy and make it hard to determine his place in the pattern of events. In all the history of the republic it is doubtful that America has produced another politician with half as powerful a grip on the unimaginative. Bryan had some brilliant followers, of course, but no other man has ever held so firmly and so long the allegiance of the dull.

This was the quality that made him a successful radical, just as Roosevelt's audacity in words made him a successful conservative. A sardonic critic remarked of Roosevelt that he thought he had discovered the Ten Commandments; but no one ever remarked the fact that Bryan discovered

the Beatitudes and made them seem realistic. When Roosevelt thundered against "malefactors of great wealth" he was merely reiterating the age-old truth, known at least as far back as the days of Job, that "the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power"; but he made it seem new and tremendously exciting. This power is an asset to any politician. But when Bryan came out for the nationalization of railroads he made it seem, to many of his followers, little more than routine development of an old American idea, therefore not exciting at all. This, too, is an asset to a politician who has a radical program to advance.

The power to blow up the embers of a dying issue until it turns incandescent and sparkling is the more spectacular of the two, but as an aid to accomplishment it is doubtful that its value equals the value of the rare ability to damp down a red-hot new issue to the point at which it may be presented, without scaring them, to suspicious voters. At this, Bryan was a past master. It was not that he was a conscious fraud. On the contrary, it was not his intention to deceive anyone, and he did not deceive those who attended strictly to what he said and wrote, paying no attention to what he was. These men—Theodore Roosevelt was one of them—appraised Bryan correctly as a fire-brand; but most of them proceeded beyond that point and fell into error by also characterizing him as a fraud. This error came, curiously enough, from the same cause that furnished the accurate appraisal—inattention to what Bryan was.

If you paid attention strictly to what Bryan was, you could hardly believe what he said; if you paid attention only to what he said, you could never believe what he was.

If you paid attention both to what he was and what he said, then you had on your hands a paradox, comprehensible only by reference, first to his immediate environment, and then to the environment that had produced him. Even so, he was mysterious to most of his contemporaries, and is not easily explicable, to this day.

This generation has, however, the inestimable advantage of being able to see forty-five years' further development of ideas advocated by Bryan in his first campaign, and this is of great assistance in attempting to estimate the man. Bryan has been described as provincial, but it is not the word for him if provincial is understood as denoting addiction to ideas that are cherished only in the man's immediate neighborhood. Bryan's way of thinking was not confined to Nebraska, or to the Middle West or, for that matter, to this country. Before Bryan, Cromwell, and before Cromwell, Coligny, and before Coligny, Jeanne d'Arc, had been followed by the same sort of people. But Bryan was provincial in the sense that his was a very special type of thinking, and a type that does not often survive in congested centers of population, where all ideas are constantly subjected to the abrasive effect of collision with other, and radically different, ideas. Bryan was literal-minded, and he appealed to literal-minded people.

Now the literal-minded, at least in rural America, hold certain theories to be self-evident; among them is the theory that they, themselves, are not dangerous radicals, so they cannot be persuaded that a man whom they recognize as one of themselves is dangerous. A highly respectable family man, a teetotaler, a stout Presbyterian, a Fundamentalist, a Sunday-school teacher and a scourge of

gamblers, drunkards and fornicators they instantly recognized not merely as one of themselves but as a representative of their most highly admired type. Charges that such a man was a political and economic heretic, a promoter of subversive doctrines, therefore fell of their own weight. Literal-minded America was committed to the doctrine that respectable citizens are not heretics, and patently Bryan was as intensely respectable a citizen as the country could show.

Nevertheless, he was a heretic of a deadly type, because he construed literally the words of fifty-five highly sophisticated gentlemen of another century. These, describing themselves as "we, the people of the United States," had framed a Constitution, as they said "in order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, insure the domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and insure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity." Bryan took this literally, especially the words "promote the general welfare." His theory was that the way to promote the general welfare was to let the people rule; but the Constitution itself is ample evidence that the Founding Fathers held the diametrically opposite view. The people, they thought, had done entirely too much ruling under the Articles of Confederation with the result that the general welfare had suffered abominably. Accordingly, they framed a Constitution under which the people might select their rulers, somewhat indirectly, but would have very little to do with the actual ruling.

This was not, however, what Bryan had been taught in school. It was not what the orators had said in the eloquent

passages that he learned by rote. It was not what was commonly believed in Lincoln, Nebraska, in which Lincoln might stand for a thousand villages and towns scattered across the continent. It was not the political "faith as it was delivered unto the saints." The doctrine that he accepted was that the makers of the Constitution had intended to "let the people rule." Stronger and stronger grew his faith that the government should not be the master of the people, nor merely an umpire, holding the scales of justice balanced as between man and man, but the agent of the majority, promoting the general welfare even before it insured domestic tranquillity. In 1896 this was genuine radicalism; but it is hardly to be denied that it has been more and more accepted by Americans until today it is the philosophy of government proclaimed at Washington.

Theodore Roosevelt, on the other hand, born to wealth, educated at Harvard, familiar with the privileged classes at home and abroad, early in life announced his intention to be "one of the governing class." He understood the intention of the framers of the Constitution and had no quarrel with it. That there should be a governing class seemed to him inevitable; any man with eyes could see that one existed, and any man capable of reading history could learn that one had always existed. The United States as it stood was a very satisfactory country, as far as he was concerned, and it was his firm intention to do what he could to maintain it essentially as it was.

However, he was intelligent enough to perceive the difference between maintaining the essence and maintaining every detail, and to realize the impossibility of the latter in a world of change. More than that, his satisfaction with



the country in general did not blind him to the fact that the second object of the Constitution, the establishment of justice, had never been perfectly attained. Nor was that all; to give him due credit, he had a strong dislike for injustice in the abstract. He believed that the establishment of justice was the best way to insure the survival of the republic, and this was his motivation in public life. But it was easy for him to see, because he loved justice, anyhow.

It is an illustration of our muddled way of thinking in politics that we usually regard as a radical the man who undertakes to overthrow ancient evil, notwithstanding the fact that, as the political understanding of the masses increases, ancient evil becomes more and more a threat to the established order. It follows, of course, that the man who seeks to overthrow it does more than most others to perpetuate the established order, and is practicing a conservatism more genuine and more effective than any other. In this sense, Theodore Roosevelt was far more conservative than William McKinley.

The fact that in the Union League Club and in certain sections of Wall Street he was denounced with almost unexampled virulence simply corroborates the theory. If there is any hatred more violent and more poisonous than that of a radical for a liberal, it is that of a reactionary for a conservative. The line from radical to reactionary is not a straight line, but a curve which has almost, if not quite, completed the cycle when it stretches from one to the other. Both radical and reactionary lie in the segment of the circle that belongs to fanaticism; they resemble each other much more closely than either resembles relatively sensible men, whether they are liberal or conservative.

In 1900 Bryan had taken a line that exhibits with extraordinary clarity both his strength and his weakness. Largely at his instigation, the Democratic party had made anti-imperialism its issue in that year, the case in point being American acquisition of the Philippine Islands, subsidiary counts in the indictment referring to Cuba and Puerto Rico. In assuming that the American people have no taste for imperialistic adventures, Bryan was perfectly right, but he lost the campaign.

The trouble was that he based his fight against imperialism on moral grounds, and, as regards what the lawyers call "the instant case" there wasn't any moral issue in it. William McKinley didn't want the Philippines, and the country knew it. The archipelago had been scandalously misgoverned by Spain, and one of the results of that misgovernment was an inner tension that was an absolute guarantee of *civitas* if the islands were left to themselves. Specifically, it was predicted, dogmatically and with some plausibility, that, if American troops were withdrawn, the pagan Moros would conquer and probably exterminate the Christian and much less warlike Filipinos. It was, observed McKinley, the "manifest destiny" of this country to remain in control until a better situation could be created.

It is true, of course, that some phrase equivalent to manifest destiny has been used to cloak his real purpose by almost every conqueror whose conquests history records. Bryan could, and did, draw eloquent historical parallels between McKinley and international villains of every degree of bloodthirstiness. The trouble was that McKinley was not using the phrase to cloak anything, and the sober common sense of the country told it so. No doubt there

were economic buccaneers ready to raid the Philippines with no more qualms of conscience than Henry Morgan felt in raiding the ships of Spain. No doubt the war against the *insurrectos* did result in the death of more than one honest, if fanatical, Filipino patriot. But it was clear that if we had withdrawn from the islands immediately after the war with Spain, anarchy would have visited upon them a punishment far more hideous than anything they suffered at our hands, or at the hands of their former overlords. McKinley knew of no way to prevent anarchy other than to remain in possession. He did remain, and the country approved.

Nevertheless, we have never liked the adventure and for a sound reason, namely, that it never has paid an adequate monetary return on what it cost. The moment it appeared at all likely that the islands had a reasonable chance of working out their own destiny without precipitating ruin upon themselves, the demand of certain of their politicians for independence began to be listened to with approval by great and increasing numbers of Americans. Producers of American sugars and fats assisted the movement because it was to their pecuniary interest to have the island's products outside the American tariff wall; but the average citizen has been pretty sure that Philippine independence was to his financial interest, too, and in 1934 it was granted, not as the fulfillment of an election campaign promise, but almost as a matter of routine legislation.

Yet observe how neatly fate has justified the position that Bryan took in 1900. The law of 1934 granted independence but did not make it immediately effective; by agreement with the Filipinos themselves there was to be a

transition period of ten years, but the main point was allowed and no one doubted that in 1944 the United States would withdraw.

But only seven of those ten years had passed, and we were still in occupation, when a genuine imperialist burst into the South Pacific. The Japanese conqueror swept southward for two thousand miles without encountering serious opposition anywhere except at one point, and that point was the Philippines. Month after month the Filipinos, under the Stars and Stripes, put up a fight against hopeless odds; and so magnificent was their resistance that it commanded the admiration of the world.

Why did they fight so much better than the Malays, or the Burmese, or the Javans, or any of the people of other occupied countries? Unquestionably, because the Congress of the United States had granted their independence. For five months, lacking one day, they pinned down a Japanese army of perhaps a quarter of a million men; and who can estimate the value of that delay to us? After forty years the United States was magnificently rewarded for having at last adopted Bryan's policy.

It was characteristic of the man that nearly always he knew what was wrong, but not always why it was wrong, and rarely, if ever, what to do about it. He was ineffective in remedying evils; but he was almost infallibly accurate in pointing them out, and men whose understanding of the needs and temper of the people was far less complete than his have brought about reforms that he demanded, but could not contrive. This is why, eighteen years after his death, nearly every major innovation that he campaigned for has been embodied in the law. Some of his projects, for

example, prohibition, have been found so bad that they have been abandoned; but practically all of them have been tried.

It was McKinley, not Roosevelt, who fought the campaign on the issue of imperialism and won it. By the time Roosevelt came to the Presidency, it was a dead issue, about which he had no reason to trouble himself. It had not escaped his notice, however, that Bryan had come within about half a million votes of beating McKinley in 1896, and had won 47 per cent of the total vote in 1900, although his opponents had the enormous advantage of just having won a war. Roosevelt perceived that the governing class, to which he belonged, in order to retain power must offer the country something more than merely negative virtues. Without perceiving the depth and power of the movement—who, indeed, did for a generation?—he was aware that the people were demanding more and more dynamic leadership. He proceeded to supply it.

But “deeply did he distrust any ideas of progress which are founded in disparagement of older moralities.” Dynamic leadership he would supply, but he would not lead in any new direction; he was willing to break new paths, but only if they led toward the old goals. To insure tranquillity and to establish justice he was willing; but to make the government an increasingly active agent in providing for the general welfare he did little. This was not one of the prime motives of the Founding Fathers, nor would he make it his.

An attack upon monopoly, however, was open to no such objection. The Sherman Anti-trust Act had been upon the statute books for a dozen years and its nonenforcement

was an excuse for perennial assaults upon the government by the opposition. Roosevelt demanded its enforcement in strong and picturesque language and urged action upon his successive Attorneys General successfully enough to create a series of spectacular actions at law. This "trust busting" was enormously popular in the country, even if the results were somewhat inconclusive. Ironically, the most brilliant success of the campaign, the Northern Securities case, completely and permanently busted perhaps the only really good trust in the country, for the combination of northwestern railroads had much to recommend it, both from the standpoint of economics and that of the public service.

The apparent meagerness of the results—there were more great business combinations, and bigger ones, when Roosevelt left office than when he entered it—has led some critics to deride the whole program as mere exhibitionism, fruitless, and never intended to be fruitful of anything save momentary popularity. They accuse Roosevelt of playing the demagogue for it never was his purpose to inflict any permanent damage upon big business; and they cite the famous "we are practical men" letter to E. H. Harriman as proof. But Roosevelt never for a moment claimed that he proposed to inflict any ill upon business; on the contrary, he always denied it vehemently. But he did not look upon law breaking as business; he called it crime, and crime it remained even when it was committed by "malefactors of great wealth."

Nor was the campaign against the trusts fruitless. It did not eliminate combinations, but it did reduce appreciably a menace to the country by comparison with

which the trusts were relatively harmless. This was the popular discontent arising from the growing belief among the people that the average American was no longer master of his own destiny even to a limited degree, but was a completely helpless pawn in the hands of the great lords of the business world. Among those great lords were many who were blind to the menace of this discontent and who regarded Roosevelt's efforts to alleviate it as fantastic folly. It was their thunderous wrath that gave him the reputation of being a radical.

We should not judge them too smugly today. With the hideous example of France before us, it is easy enough for us to comprehend how the demolition of all public confidence in the honesty and good faith of its government may riddle a republic imperceptibly as termites do an apparently sound timber, until the thing is ready to crash at a touch. With the examples of Italy and Germany before us, we ought to understand better than did Roosevelt's contemporaries how much political doctrine there is in the old fable of the frogs' preference for King Stork over King Log.

The same experience should give us a keener perception of how great a conservative was Theodore Roosevelt. Perhaps it is true that he did not restore competitive conditions by rounding up herds of infuriated millionaires and haling them before the bar of justice as if they had been so many pickpockets or tavern brawlers; but he did restore the people's faith in the power of their government, and by so much restricted their impulse to make radical alterations in its form. During his lifetime it was accepted without question that Theodore Roosevelt was the most uproarious

President who had occupied the White House since Andrew Jackson. Superficially, it was true; but nearly thirty-five years after his departure from that residence it is plain enough that his surface uproar was really insuring the domestic tranquillity by persuading the people that their government as it stood was powerful enough to protect their interests, and so did not need to be altered or abolished.

The show that Roosevelt put on in connection with countless domestic issues was so gaudy that it fascinated the country and has been the delight of chroniclers ever since; but that part of his work really has little to do with his quality as a statesman. It was exceedingly important in his role as a politician, but it had small effect on the form and structure of the American government, except in one department, which was that of preservation of the national domain. Here, again, Roosevelt, the apparent radical, was in fact Roosevelt, the great conservative; but it is easier to demonstrate the truth, in this case. The very word "conservation" indicates it and the counselors whose advice Roosevelt followed, typified by such a man as Gifford Pinchot, although they were called radical, were far from disparaging the old moralities. On the contrary, they were the warmest advocates of a restoration of the old moralities, including common honesty. The national domain was being looted by methods which one of the oldest of the moralists, Moses, himself disparaged in the succinct direction, "Thou shalt not steal."

It is at least arguable, however, that the Roosevelt conservation policy is less significant for the number of forests, mines, oil pools, water powers, and so forth, that



it saved than for the demonstration it afforded to the people that their government really was capable of acting as their agent in the protection of their interests. It tended to slacken the demand for profound changes, and steadied popular faith in the possibility of making democracy work.

The Roosevelt foreign policy is remembered now as embodied in three items, Panama, the Treaty of Portsmouth, and the fleet's trip around the world. They are curiously contradictory, two of them being capable of easy construction as truculence, while the other is as clearly pacific. Roosevelt was a good deal more than merely host to the peace conference between Russia and Japan in 1905; the extraordinary combination of energy, patience and tact which he exhibited on that occasion contributed largely to the success of the settlement. How much he did was not suspected at the time, nor for many years afterward, simply because most people were unable to believe that Theodore Roosevelt could be patient and tactful; but the memoirs of members of the conference, both Russian and Japanese, and the archives of various governments proved beyond a reasonable doubt that the success of the conference owed much to him. But the peace that Portsmouth brought to Asia lasted just ten years.

The Panama incident was one reason why the public could not see him as a pacificator. What Roosevelt actually did in Panama is not difficult to defend, but his methods were raw. They were not, however, the methods that he first chose and that presumably he preferred. In the beginning, he offered to the Republic of Colombia a fair bargain. For the right to build a canal across the Isthmus of Panama,

which Colombia had already granted to a French company, he offered to pay \$10,000,000 in a lump sum and a rental of \$250,000 a year. The negotiators for Colombia accepted the bargain. But the South American republic at the time was in the control of a notoriously unscrupulous gang, and when it was revealed that the French company was to get \$40,000,000 for its holdings the gang decided that it had not had enough. Therefore the treaty with the United States was rejected and the French concession was abrogated.

To Roosevelt, and to most of his countrymen, it seemed to be sheer extortion, but to Philippe Bunau-Varilla, agent of the French company, it meant a threat to \$40,000,000. Accordingly, he became exceedingly active plotting a revolutionary movement in Panama, while the American authorities ostentatiously paid no attention whatever to his doings. There is no doubt that some of the Frenchman's agents went pretty far; but there is no reason to assume that the President of the United States was acquainted with the details of their devious transactions. To charge him, as some of his more rabid critics did, with condoning downright bribery, is silly; as long as the President was content to know nothing, the agents would have been insane to thrust such knowledge upon him.

But he was officially aware, at last, that Panama was threatened with disturbances, and under the authority granted him by a treaty half a century old, which gave the United States a right to maintain order in the isthmus, he sent warships there. The commanding officer was ordered to prevent fighting that would threaten the railroad. He did, and in doing so he necessarily prevented the

Colombian government from putting down the revolution. The State Department promptly recognized the new Republic of Panama, and Panama as promptly accepted the treaty that Colombia had rejected.

The worst that can fairly be said of this transaction is that it was a case of fighting the devil with fire. The terms the American government offered in the beginning were fair; if they were unjust to anyone, they were unjust to the American taxpayer, rather than to the Colombians. The lump sum payment of \$10,000,000 was payment for nothing but good will, for all the tangible property belonged to the French company. The rental, which began in nine years, although it took seventeen years finally to complete the canal, amounts to the interest on an additional \$5,000,000. The Colombian attempt to secure more was an unscrupulous use of a technical advantage; and this plain effort to commit a hold up the United States defeated with a hardly more scrupulous use of its right to maintain order on the isthmus.

Roosevelt himself admitted that bargaining had been ruled out when he said, "I took Panama," and the country admitted it in 1922, when it paid Colombia the sum of \$25,000,000 to settle all outstanding claims. However, although the thing might have been done better, it was done. The canal was built, and the country was too enthusiastic over the job to be censorious of the means employed. More than that, it is at least arguable that there was value in the demonstration that the United States could be pushed too far. Other military adventurers contemplating extortion may have been discouraged by what happened in Panama.

However, nobody, whether defender or critic of the

Panama affair, claims that it was anything more than an emergency measure. It did not establish, and was not intended to establish, a precedent by which the foreign relations of the United States were to be guided. It patched up the canal-building program so that it could proceed; that was all.

The dispatch of the fleet on a voyage around the world is the third event of the Roosevelt Administration in its relations with other countries that made a deep impression on public opinion. But it too was purely episodic. As a detail of naval policy it was, of course, downright insane. With the bulk of its fighting strength on the other side of the globe, the United States for some months was open to attack; and a naval policy that deliberately would leave the country open to attack certainly cannot be called altogether rational.

But this voyage was not part of the naval policy, except as it furnished some more or less valuable training to personnel. In the main, it belonged to political policy, and in that light it takes on a quite different color. When this voyage began, the standing of the United States as a naval power was not high. The war with Spain had given to much of the world its first suspicion that there might be a maritime power on this side of the globe. Statesmen and naval strategists accordingly had informed themselves, but the knowledge had not penetrated to the populations of many foreign countries. The visit of the fleet to their ports was accordingly an eye opener. At the same time, the arrangements were handled so skillfully that the event took on a festal, rather than a threatening air. As a matter of fact, wise men among the authorities of foreign coun-

tries were not displeased to have their people informed of the developing naval strength of this country. A population laboring under the misapprehension that the United States was negligible on the seas might have forced a foreign minister into action he would have preferred not to take. But once people had seen with their own eyes the tremendous strength this country was able to muster, they would be more likely to listen to the advice of informed men among their own officials.

However this, too, was an isolated action, not intended to set a precedent, or to swerve the foreign policy of the United States in a new direction.

A critic with a preference for the nasty word might plausibly assert that Theodore Roosevelt's whole career, as a responsible statesman, was given over to patching. His attacks on monopoly, his strengthening of the Civil Service, his advocacy of larger and more effective popular participation in elections through the direct primary, and on legislation, through the referendum and recall, were efforts to patch up the economic and political system so that it would withstand the discontent that had been spectacularly revealed in 1896.

But why call it patching when it is just as plausible to call it strengthening? The man who refuses to let the house be touched, although it is obviously deteriorating, until it falls down on his head is not a conservative. He is a fool. Throughout his career Theodore Roosevelt constantly advocated changes in our governmental system, thereby convincing all the fools in the country, and some ordinarily wise men, too, that he was a radical. In retrospect, though, it is easy enough to see that never in his life did

he advocate a change until the section of the system concerned was obviously beginning to totter. Why should he? The political, economic and social system as he found it suited him. He had no desire to change it; on the contrary, he burned with enthusiasm for preserving it unaltered in any essential detail. He believed firmly that nothing more was required than the application of the older moralities to establish justice under the system as it existed. But, being intelligent, he did not close his eyes to the inevitable effect of time, which wears down the fabric of government as it wears down all other fabrics. He admitted that many parts of our national structure were in bad repair, and he was an enthusiastic advocate of the policy of making the repairs before anything collapsed. He was a true conservative, the greatest the twentieth century has as yet produced.

Roosevelt put the extinguisher on Bryan, and kept it there for twenty years. It was not merely that he stood in the way of realization of the Nebraskan's political ambitions. It was more than that. Roosevelt for a time made Bryan unnecessary. It is true that in 1900 McKinley won by a larger majority than he had received in 1896. It is true that the general prosperity that followed the war with Spain dulled the edge of discontent. But the discontent remained, for the situation that had created it was unchanged. The development of the economic system continued to disinherit more and more Americans, and to bring them more and more toward a condition approximating serfdom. Had nothing whatever been done, as nothing was done under McKinley, the pressure of that

discontent inevitably would have blown up the Republican party.

But Roosevelt's palliative measures, although they were mere palliations, not remedies, served the purpose of releasing enough of the pressure to prevent an explosion. Nevertheless, Bryan was right. The forces that he perceived were, in fact, thrusting the country—and not this country only, but the world—toward a renovation of ancient economic and political concepts far more thoroughgoing than anything Roosevelt effected or advocated. Certain of the older moralities were, in fact, false, and their disparagement was inevitable. But the cleverness of the reformer made it impossible for the revolutionist to make much headway; and before the inadequacy of mere reform was made clear, Bryan's career in public life was practically ended.

The Sunday-school teacher, the reputable citizen, the pious churchman certainly never looked upon himself as a revolutionist, but the core of his doctrine was the whole of which Lenin apprehended a part. The Russian preached the dictatorship of the proletariat. Bryan's conception was nothing so narrow, nor can it be defined so simply. Bryan was an orator, not a philosopher, which is to say, he was always ready to sacrifice precision to sonority; but he made it abundantly plain that he did not conceive of the government as an impartial umpire as between man and man. He looked upon it as an instrument, an implement and, if necessary, a weapon for the use of the people in promoting the general welfare. Roosevelt believed in dynamic leadership, but Bryan believed in a dynamic state. They were both inclined to believe in personal devils;

but whereas Roosevelt held to the theory that the American system would have worked to the satisfaction of everyone had it not been prevented from doing so by the machinations of a few wicked men, Bryan held that the very fact that the machinations of wicked men could distort the system proved the system's inadequacy.

The years have sustained his contention, but they have not sustained Bryan's reputation as a statesman.

He wasn't a statesman, he was a prophet. Perhaps he was more than a statesman, perhaps he was less. The decision depends upon whether your definition of greatness is based upon conception, or upon accomplishment. The statesman is certainly to be judged by his accomplishments, and of direct accomplishment Bryan's career is strangely bare. The fact remains, however, that the very greatest statesmen have in them something of the prophet, and it is just this touch that lifts them to the pinnacle. Theodore Roosevelt was a statesman. His career was full of accomplishments, but most of them have lost all significance for the present generation. The Panama Canal still exists, and has grown more useful, rather than less so, with the passage of the years. Theodore Roosevelt caused it to be built, and his name will be associated with it as long as it exists. Yet it would be a reckless assertion to declare that except for Roosevelt it would never have been built. It seems much more likely that what he actually did was to advance the date of its construction by a few years. For the rest, the trusts remain unbusted, and the Treaty of Portsmouth has been merely a scrap of paper these many years.

Bryan, on the other hand, accomplished relatively little, but he predicted with amazing accuracy the way in which



the world was to move. Bryan always knew what the problem was, but he never knew the answer. Roosevelt probably never understood the problems, but he knew all the answers. The result was that Roosevelt was successful, but Bryan was justified.

There is, to be sure, an unanswered question in the amazing close of his career. Called to the State Department by Woodrow Wilson in 1913 he found himself, a little over a year later, in the sort of situation which Theodore Roosevelt would have met splendidly, but with which Bryan was incompetent to deal. It is one of the basic axioms of warfare, stated in the elementary text-books of strategy, that it is better to do any intelligent thing promptly than to waste time seeking for the ideal action. A Secretary of State when a great war is raging is to some extent in the position of a commander in the field, even if this country is not a belligerent. In 1914 a great war broke out, and from that moment it was essential for the American Secretary of State to act with speed and decision on the situation on hand. Nothing can be worse, in time of war, than indecision and delay, even if the delay is occasioned by a sincere effort to make action conform to age-old principles. Even though Bryan, like Roosevelt, had served in the Spanish War as a colonel of volunteers, he had never mastered this truth.

Bryan was no respecter of material facts. Certain principles he accepted as divinely inspired and therefore of a higher order of truth than any material fact. One of these was the evil of war. He believed it to be absolute; therefore, when the course of events began sweeping this country inexorably in the direction of war, he could see

nothing but evil in facing the fact and acting on the basis of events as they happened and not as they should have been. The outcome was that he wrecked any chance this country may have had of bringing about a negotiated peace without participating actively in the strife. In 1941 it is pretty clear that this chance was never very good, so it would be nonsensical to assert that Bryan precipitated the war of 1917-18; but his course was certainly not effective in preventing it.

His two years in the State Department may have gone far toward curing him of any desire to participate actively in the conduct of government; it is hard to say, because circumstances were such that the opportunity was never thereafter presented. He made no great effort to affect the course of events but that was due, in part at least, to his sense of loyalty to the Administration. He was always loyal. It is easy to believe, though, that he really did not desire office.

He has been accused of turning mystic out of disappointment. It may be true, but it is not certainly true. He had always been conventionally religious and had always taken as active a part in church affairs as time permitted. His Bible class was nationally famous, and his lay sermons are among the most eloquent of his writings. But his faith was accepted, not built out of his own thought and experience. He was a man of words, and it was easy for him to give to the text, "the Word was with God and the Word was God" a significance that perhaps never occurred to the writer. After his retirement from office, he had more time to devote to religious affairs and this is as plausible an explanation of his increased religious activity as is pique.

But when he withdrew, in 1915, he found already made to his hand a controversy that, to such a man as Bryan, was full of possibilities. Five years earlier a group of churchmen had issued a pamphlet called *The Fundamentals, a Testimony to the Truth*. The pamphlet itself was purely theological, but it engendered such heat within the churches that it had begun to spread to the secular field, reviving the old controversy between orthodox religion and science that most people had forgotten since the celebrated encounter between Huxley and Bishop Wilberforce, fifty years earlier. With Huxley's disposal of "Soapy Sam," the articulate world had supposed the issue decided; but, as a matter of fact, the vastly greater inarticulate world had never heard of either Huxley or the Bishop. When Bryan began to thunder against modernism it came to millions as something new, startling, and vicious. Presently Legislature after Legislature began to pass laws forbidding the teaching of Darwin's hypothesis of organic evolution in the public schools.

Among others, the Legislature of Tennessee passed such a law, and it became the subject of what was apparently somewhat ribald comment in the east Tennessee village of Dayton where a prominent citizen, chaffingly as the story goes, threatened a young high school teacher named Scopes with indictment if he taught the forbidden doctrine. Scopes accepted the challenge and one thing led to another until it was decided to make a test case. Scopes accordingly taught evolution and was duly indicted.

There followed one of the most astounding spectacles in the history of American jurisprudence. When the news of Scopes' indictment spread abroad, the greatest criminal

lawyer in America, Clarence Darrow, who, as a showman, had talents surpassing even those of Bryan, offered his services as counsel for the defense; and Bryan agreed to assist in the prosecution. The trial immediately became a startling burlesque of the judicial process. The question of the guilt or innocence of Scopes was instantly subordinated to the duel of wits between Bryan and Darrow; the issues debated were entirely theological or scientific; there paraded to the witness stand a downright fabulous array of learned doctors, some of divinity, others of philosophy, but none claiming to have the slightest acquaintance with Scopes or his teaching. The grand climax came when Bryan himself took the stand as a witness, and, under Darrow's devilishly clever cross-examination, was trapped into denying that man is a mammal.

But here, at the very end, Bryan at last won a battle, at least in the technical sense. Scopes was convicted and sentenced to pay a fine.

The irony of ironies is that this completely worthless victory cost the man such respect as the intelligent still held for him and, in fact, may have cost him his life. Five days after the verdict Bryan died suddenly in the village where he had been subjecting himself for weeks to intense mental and emotional strain in the heat of a Tennessee summer.

Better than any of his contemporaries he foresaw and charted for others the course that political thought was to take in this country; and he came to his end endeavoring to subvert scientific thinking. As far as this country is concerned, that campaign ended at Dayton; but it has been

carried on elsewhere. It has proceeded at least as far as Stalingrad. Is it ended yet? Will it ever end? Nothing else that Bryan stood for has died out altogether . . . let us speculate along that line no further.

*The Cream of the Jest*

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TO SAY that the funeral of Woodrow Wilson was perhaps the most insignificant event mentioned in all the text-books of American history may be to arouse scandalized protest; but if the words are taken literally, the assertion is easily defended. It is mentioned in all the text-books; yet, save to the relatively small group of people who knew the man personally, that burial in 1924 was without significance. The millions who never came into contact with him as a man, knew him only as a politician and a statesman; yet in 1924 Wilson as a politician had been dead for years, and as for Wilson the statesman, he isn't dead yet. So what does it signify that they deposited a worn-out body in St. Alban's Cathedral in Washington almost exactly twenty years ago?

There is a terrific jest in connection with the career of Woodrow Wilson. He was repudiated by the American people.

For a long time nobody saw anything comic in that; and this imperviousness is, of course, the cream of the jest. For fourteen years, in fact, the American people solemnly accepted it as a fact much to their credit, that they had

repudiated Woodrow Wilson; they so accepted it from 1919 to 1933. But when Hindenburg appointed a certain Adolf Hitler as Chancellor of the German Reich the more perceptive Americans began to sense vaguely a discrepancy somewhere, and for the next six years that uneasiness increased. But perhaps not until December 7, 1941, did the majority of Americans realize that in repudiating Woodrow Wilson they had paralleled the feat of that Mid-Western Legislature which in the mid-twenties, adopted a resolution to the effect that thereafter in that State *pi* should represent 3, and not 3.1415 plus. We repudiated Woodrow Wilson—say, rather, that we repudiated Destiny, we repudiated Fact, we repudiated Reality. There is the point of the joke.

Put it that in 1919 the American people said, "You must stop it!" to Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos, the three Fates. We said it seriously, curtly, and turned our backs; nor did we guess for fourteen years that we had left Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos, grinning from ear to ear.

It is not a fortunate nation that the Weird Sisters hold in derision. The jokes that they play are grim jests indeed. Wilson knew it. In 1924, just before his death, he wrote to Philip Kerr, "The great tragedy of the last six years is the fact that American failure to accept world responsibility means that the job will have to be done over again within twenty years and at ten times the cost." He overestimated the time; it was seventeen years later, not twenty, that the thunderbolt fell, as he had said it would. But he underestimated the effect; it has exacted more than ten times the cost of the war of 1917-18.

There is a strange implacability tinging the whole story

of Wilson, exemplified best, perhaps, by the way in which he has come back to life. It was none of our doing. As a nation we were perfectly willing to leave him forever in the realm of gloomy Dis. Countless literary undertakers assisted by embalming him in a small library of volumes, biographies, laudatory and comminatory, histories, memoirs, essays, studies of all degrees of competence and incompetence, philosophical dissertations, text-books. But it is perhaps significant that there is no first-rate novel, play, or poem about Woodrow Wilson. When scholars write up a man voluminously he may be pronounced, as a rule, very thoroughly dead. Not science or philosophy, but art alone can bring a man of the past back to life. Scholars never revive such a man, and in the case of Wilson it must be said, with all due respect to Mr. Ray Stannard Baker and the rest, that they haven't even made him look natural.

The artists, however, haven't touched him—or certainly not successfully. Perhaps this is accident; but perhaps it is due to the artists' perception, whether clear or only half apprehended, that there is an artistic imbalance in the story, an asymmetry, as if a segment were missing. Certainly a segment is being added to the story of Woodrow Wilson now; for the gaunt, old Presbyterian is alive again, is dominant again in all men's hearts and minds.

It was none of our doing. It was the relentless march of events, the operation of cold logic, of stern reality, of pitiless truth that called this gray ghost from the cathedral crypt. What he said would happen has happened. The thunder of the guns in Poland drowned the scornful laughter with which we received his prophecy, and, appalled, we



realized that what we took for stones with which to stone his dream to death were in reality dragon's teeth.

And yet no fair-minded man, looking back upon it now, can fail to see that we were, in some measure, trapped. We were—and are—to a greater extent than we like to admit a soft-minded, romantic people, fed upon fairy stories, and this man flung Holy Writ in our faces. The New Economic Era, two cars in every garage, the permanent abolition of poverty—these we could believe, coming from a great engineer and a shrewd Vermont Yankee; so naturally when a college professor intoned, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," we recognized him as an impractical idealist, and if the high gods roared with mirth, yet it was a natural assumption. For Woodrow Wilson came in strange trappings. In body and in mind, he was old-fashioned. In an earlier day we might have placed him more easily, for we had seen men of his type before, but not for a long time. John C. Calhoun and Andrew Jackson both resembled him, in body and in temperament, but the Calhoun-Jackson type had not figured prominently in American politics for many years, and in Wilson's time a majority of Americans knew nothing of it.

A cursory examination of his origin, his early environment and his career is enough to explain why he was bound to confuse and bewilder a great many of his fellow-citizens. He was of Scotch-Irish ancestry; he came from the South; he was a stout Presbyterian. Each of these facts is significant and each helped to puzzle the country, each contributed, and was bound to contribute, to its misconception of the man.

Woodrow Wilson was a Scotch-Irishman. A hundred

years ago the country understood better than it does today what that statement implies, for a hundred years ago the country was much more thoroughly British than it is today. The Scotch-Irishman is something of an enigma even to the unhyphenated Scot, to the Englishman, and to the Welshman; but they all understand him better than the rest of the world, including the Celtic Irish. Jackson and Calhoun puzzled somewhat a country still predominantly British, but not as much as Wilson puzzled a country that for a century had been growing more and more non-British, in blood and in ways of thinking.

Wilson was a Calvinist in a country at least twenty-five per cent Catholic, Lutheran and Jewish and probably forty per cent skeptic. The Calvinist, too, has always been difficult for men of other religions to understand; but the proportion of Calvinists in America a century ago was higher than it is now, and therefore the popular ability to understand them was greater.

Wilson was a Southerner by birth and breeding, although he made his career in the North. The Southerner, certainly from 1865 to 1900, was a man compelled to deal with economic, social and political problems of a highly specialized kind. His experience differed in important respects from that of the citizen of any other region, so, inevitably, his attitudes differed. As a result, he puzzled other Americans. New Englander and Californian may not have understood each other thoroughly in those years, but they did not differ from each other on nearly as many points as those on which the Southerner differed from them both.

The Scot in his native country has never had the repu-

tation of being a soft man, physically or morally; but the Scotch-Irishman is a Scot whose forebears for three hundred years have lived subject to stresses and strains which the Caledonian has never experienced. Ever since the days of Oliver Cromwell the inhabitants of Ulster have regarded themselves as to some extent in a state of siege. This has resulted in the production of strong men, but not amiable men, and, above all, not soft men. The Aberdonian is hard enough to scratch glass; but the Ulsterman can scratch an Aberdonian.

The theology of John Calvin commands respect, but for its strength, not for its gentleness and suavity. A Scotch-Irish Presbyterian is therefore a man whose strength and hardness, already great, are reinforced by a strong and hard religion. He is formidable indeed.

A man born in the South in 1856 was nine years old when the Civil War ended. He therefore came to years of understanding in a land where life was harder than it was, or ever had been, anywhere else in America. The poverty of the South in the years immediately after Appomattox came close to, and in large areas quite matched that of Jamestown in the Starving Time, or that of Plymouth a dozen years later; and in addition to poverty the South labored for a time under a handicap not laid upon the colonists, that of having its social and political structure destroyed, and an alien race raised to dominance over it. In the struggle that lasted nearly a generation, the weak went under or fled. The survivors came out strong, but hard—too often, twisted, as well as hard.

Woodrow Wilson was a Scotch-Irish, Presbyterian Southerner. It was a tripartite forging that shaped him—

heats and hammerings fit to produce a man psychically so hard that by comparison with him Henry Morgan, the buccaneer, seems little better than putty.

The Rev. Dr. Joseph R. Wilson, minister of the Presbyterian church at Staunton, Va., in 1856, was an earnest and honest clergyman who, in his youth in Ohio, had learned the printer's trade and later, at Princeton, had imbibed a taste for learning, which his choice of a career as a Presbyterian minister did nothing to discourage. Of all the Protestant sects the Presbyterians are perhaps the most notable for their dislike of ignorance in the clergy. Two years after the birth of the son whom he christened Thomas Woodrow, the learned divine removed to Augusta, Georgia, where he was living at the outbreak of the Civil War. After the catastrophe, he accepted a chair in the Presbyterian Theological Seminary at Columbia, South Carolina, and a few years later sent his son to Davidson College, North Carolina, at that time probably the best Presbyterian college in the South. The experiment was not a success. Young Wilson's health suffered under the strain of college work, and he dropped out after a year. In the meantime, his father had returned to the active ministry, taking a church at Wilmington, North Carolina.

A year at home restored the young man physically, at least far enough to enable him to undertake collegiate work again. This time he entered his father's *Alma Mater*, Princeton, where he was graduated with the Class of 1879.

He then took a law course at the University of Virginia, and entered practice in Atlanta, Georgia. This experiment, too, was not a success, and from its failure all sorts of psychological deductions have been drawn by men

who assume that Woodrow Wilson really wanted to be a lawyer. The truth is that at the time, and for a good many years afterward, for a young Southern college graduate to study law proved only that he did not like either medicine or theology. Business was not a career. This is hard to understand sixty years later; and it was quite impossible to understand in, say, New York in 1880; but it is the literal truth. In 1880 the South was feeling the first faint stirrings of the industrialism that was to absorb its energies and many of its best brains for the next half-century, but the movement had not yet really gotten under way. Business meant commerce, and commerce demanded the mental and temperamental endowment of the trader. While there is nothing intrinsically disreputable about trading as a career, it does require talents of a narrowly specialized type. The broader ability of the organizer and administrator was not in demand in the business world of the South in 1880, so young men who felt in themselves the capacity for leadership turned to the professions, which meant the church, medicine and law. It was generally recognized that a special aptitude was requisite to success in either divinity or medicine, but not in law; so a young man at a loss for anything else to do turned that way.

The result was that some oddly assorted characters were admitted to the bar in the Southern States. Sidney Lanier studied law. So did Josephus Daniels. So did Thomas Nelson Page. The fact that Woodrow Wilson became a lawyer is illuminating as to the narrowness of opportunity in the South at that time, rather than as to the mental traits of the man.

In any event, his career at the bar was of the briefest.

After a year, he abandoned it and betook himself to the Johns Hopkins University at Baltimore, which, under the presidency of the great Gilman, was revolutionizing the standards of American scholarship. Perhaps too little attention has been paid to this experience as one of the influences shaping Wilson's subsequent career. True, he was a grown man when he went to the Johns Hopkins, but he was still a young man. Above all, he was a Scotch-Irish Presbyterian, and he went to the one American university that at the time was absolutely uncompromising in its austere adherence to scientific standards.

It is difficult for the modern generation to realize what a jolt this institution had delivered to the American system of higher education. Up to 1876 all our universities adhered, or pretended to adhere, to the philosophical English standard. Most of them fell far short of that standard, but it was the one to which they paid lip-service. The country was full of individual scholars, many of them trained in the rigidly scientific German schools, who deplored the lack of precision and the generally slipshod methods into which American scholarship had fallen, but individually they could do little about it. One of the ablest of this group was Daniel Coit Gilman, and it was his fortune to be called to head a new university with what was, for the period, a gigantic endowment, and with a board of trustees disposed to tie no strings to him. The institution he set up was manned almost exclusively by Americans, and the principal address at its opening was delivered by an Englishman, T. H. Huxley, but in the rigidity of its scientific standards it yielded nothing to any German, or other European university. Even by Woodrow Wilson's time,

after only five years of operation, it was already evident that it was going to be enormously successful; it was bitterly denounced by conservatives, of course, but other universities were beginning to adopt its methods, and it must have been plain to Wilson that the Hopkins idea was destined to dominate the field.

The importance of this lies in the fact that the scientific method is based on rigid adherence to truth, with the least possible concession—in theory no concession whatever—to emotion or to human weakness and fallibility. Consider the situation: here was a man at the threshold of his career, a young, Scotch-Irish Presbyterian, that is to say, a young man of an austere race, bred in a notably austere tradition; this young man saw developing before his eyes an almost unexampled success in the educational world, won by adherence to standards of almost unexampled austerity. If Woodrow Wilson had not been uncompromising by temperament and by training, his experience in gaining a Ph.D. at the Johns Hopkins in its early days might easily have made him so. As it was, this experience undoubtedly reinforced heavily a trait already present.

A few years' teaching at Bryn Mawr and at Wesleyan preceded his appointment to the history faculty of Princeton University in 1890. The brilliance of his record there is attested by the fact that within a dozen years he had risen to the presidency of the university. But Princeton was not another Johns Hopkins, the basic difference being that it was very old, and in the course of many generations had accumulated accretions of sentiment and tradition that had hardened into the consistency of ancient concrete. It is obvious, as regards many of them, that their basis was

custom, not reason; some of them, no doubt, represented a regrettable slackness in the mental discipline of the institution; but it is by no means certain that their removal was as imperatively and urgently necessary as it seemed to Woodrow Wilson. In any event, there were those who liked the old ways, and they were obstinately defended. In the main, Wilson was right, and the reforms he effected at Princeton were numerous and salutary; but he effected them only at cost of a fight that rent the university so badly as to counteract much of the good he accomplished.

By the year 1910 the war had reached a stalemate; Wilson had won a number of battles, but his enemies had won on the important point of the location of a new Graduate School, and all hands were thoroughly sick of the incessant fighting. Then in stepped the Democratic boss of New Jersey, Senator James Smith, better known to fame as "Sugar Jim," with a singular idea. Somehow he acquired the notion that Wilson would make a good organization Governor of New Jersey. What possessed Sugar Jim to betray him into such an error no one can say, for there was nothing whatever in the man's record to support it. Possibly the boss was convinced by the brilliant, but erratic, George Harvey, editor of *Harper's Weekly*, and ablest of the press representatives of the great financial and industrial interests. It was an almost fabulously bad choice on Harvey's part, too, but his judgment of men was never conspicuously reliable.

Whatever the reason, these two Warwicks proceeded to make the fighting president of Princeton the Governor of New Jersey, and he promptly became a fighting Governor. He proceeded to ram through the Legislature a



program of laws curbing the power of the great corporations and acutely distressing the Democratic machine. Sugar Jim, by the way, took it with curious mildness; probably he felt that he had asked for it, when he made that man Governor, and was sportsman enough to accept the consequences of his own mistake. But the uproar in New Jersey delighted the country, which was disgusted with the reactionary trend of the Taft Administration at Washington; especially did it delight William Jennings Bryan, himself a connoisseur of eloquent polemic, in which Wilson was a past master. So in 1912 Bryan flung all his great influence to Wilson, who was nominated at the Baltimore convention and won an easy victory over an opposition split between Taft and Theodore Roosevelt.

There is no doubt whatever that Woodrow Wilson was a great social philosopher. There is no doubt that he understood the basic structure of our government, its skeletal framework, as well as any man of his time, and far better than most men then in public life. Conclusive evidence of this may be found in the program of legislation of the first half of his first administration. Formally and openly he avowed the fact that party leadership is a necessary function of the Presidency—a fact accepted and acted upon by every strong President, but openly proclaimed by none before his time. Within those first two years he pushed through Congress an amazing number of radical alterations in our political, social and economic systems, and the proof that they were not mere changes but genuine reforms is the fact that once embodied in the law they have never been removed.

In the restricted field of American government, whose

structure he thoroughly understood, he was superb. He accomplished an astonishing amount, and speculation cannot fix bounds to what more he might have done had he been permitted to continue his work in that field.

But the war that began in 1914 shattered all his plans, and compelled him to reconstruct them. In the beginning he seems to have shared the delusion, common to most Americans, that the conflict might be localized and restrained to the continent of Europe. Pursuit of this illusion led him repeatedly into blunders that rose up to plague him later; but once he realized that the sheer size and weight of the United States must make it a participant in any war of world-wide proportions, he set himself to the same austere and uncompromising analysis of this problem that he was accustomed to make of any other.

He was not long in reaching the conclusion that participation in the war was justifiable only if it led to the creation of safeguards against a repetition of the disaster. This, he decided, was reasonable and right; and from that moment he was completely uncompromising on that point. He desired a treaty based on reason and right at the end of the conflict; but he was prepared to accept, and unhappily did accept, a questionable treaty, provided he secured the erection of machinery by which subsequent international disputes might be settled juridically, rather than by violence. On this he would not yield either jot or tittle.

So much for Wilson. But what sort of country was he leading into this campaign? It was a pretty slack and slip-shod country—certainly not a country given to scientific precision in its thinking, certainly not a country with much of the scientist's uncompromising devotion to pursuit

of the truth, regardless of human emotions and human frailties. The country was filled with wrath against Germany, and it wanted to see Germany whipped. That was the sole and simple basis of its war-making. The country, for the most part, had no objection to the creation of an improved world order, if that might be accomplished after defeat of Germany; but with the country the creation of the new order was incidental to victory, whereas with Wilson victory was incidental to the creation of the new order.

What this dichotomy meant in the history of the world we are only now beginning to comprehend. A League of Nations backed by the full moral and military power of the United States, Wilson's solution, might not have worked. We do not know. The mere beating of Germany, the solution the people preferred and imposed, did not work. That we do know, because the fact is written in fire and blood across the map of the world today. Perhaps we rejected a solution that would not work, but certainly we accepted one that would not work.

Countless writers, in innumerable books, have pointed out when and where and how Wilson failed, but it is all empty gabble. Wilson failed before he started. Wilson failed because in the very nature of things he was doomed to failure. Many things he might have done differently, some, no doubt, he might have done more wisely, but the result would not have been altered. He would have failed because, no matter how he altered himself, he could not alter the country he was leading, and his country was not equal to the burden he imposed upon it. At the same time, being the man he was, he had to impose that burden. Be-

ing Wilson, he could not do otherwise. His was a tragedy in the Grecian style, the hopeless contest of a strong man against implacable destiny.

After the lapse of more than twenty years it is easy to see the hopelessness of expecting a nation such as the United States of America was in 1919 to comprehend such a concept as that of the League of Nations. It was an unbeaten country, a happy country, an optimistic country; and the League of Nations was the fruit of wisdom born of defeat, suffering and disillusionment. With our customary joyous facility at getting the cart before the horse, most of us looked upon the League as impractically idealistic. What was wildly impractical, of course, was the idealistic assumption that in the crowded world of the twentieth century, the nations could live happily and safely together without any provision for restraint of one that might go mad. The League of Nations was the grimly realistic acceptance of an unpleasant fact; but America was too little scarred, too little tested, too full of ebullient self-confidence and adolescent scorn of all others to accept realism, or even to recognize it.

To this day an astonishing number of Americans are incredulous when they are reminded that the Covenant of the League of Nations, as it was originally drawn, included machinery for the rectification of any errors that might be discovered in the Treaty of Versailles. Under that Covenant, Germany might have attained, through processes resembling a suit at law rather than war, the correction of whatever impositions she could prove to be plainly unjust.

It is possible that Germany never was in the mood to

seek rectification of injustice by peaceful means. It is possible that the hurt to her pride, inflicted by the war of 1914-18, was more painful than the terms of the treaty; and a hurt to pride is not easily salved by a law-suit. It is possible, in short, that she would have gone to war in any case.

But it is equally possible that the Germans are not, or were not twenty years ago, implacable enemies of the human race, but merely a defeated people suffering under a peace treaty that they regarded as unjust, and sincerely believing that there was no way of securing justice except by force of arms. If it had been known to them that there was a possibility of securing substantial justice through legal process, and almost a certainty that an appeal to arms would fail, the blandishments of Hitler and his fellow-fanatics might have fallen on deaf ears, and the tragedy of 1939 might not have occurred.

Of course this is not certain; but there was a chance that it might have happened. The machinery for correcting the mistakes of Versailles was erected in the Covenant; there is a chance that the machinery might have been used, had the League been endowed with the power to move it; but the power to operate judicial machinery is only to a small extent police power. Mainly, it is the moral power possessed by a disinterested judge, and the only nation possessed of that power was the United States, which rejected the League. Naturally, from that moment, it never had a chance.

Not a few of Wilson's supporters clung for years, and some still cling to the dismal theory that the League of Nations was destroyed out of partisan jealousy and spite.

Wilson's ill-advised appeal for a Democratic Congress, in 1918, with the war still raging, undoubtedly had done much to strengthen and envenom party spirit which had, indeed, never been completely damped, even by the exigencies of war; and the upsurge of that spirit provoked by the 1918 appeal played its part in 1919. Probably there were those who had nothing else in mind. In view of the subsequent activities that landed him in the penitentiary it is not difficult to believe that such a Republican as Albert B. Fall may have been animated in the League of Nations fight more by the desire to win office for the Republicans than by anything else. However, the supposition that the hopes of all mankind were dashed to the ground to the sole end that Harding might be President and Fall Secretary of the Interior, is an irony so terrific that imagination boggles at it. Nor do the facts support it. The remarkable feature of that controversy is not how many small men were moved by partisanship, but how many first-rate men rose above it. William H. Taft and Elihu Root come to mind at once, and there were many other Republicans who fought valiantly in support of the idea of a Democratic President.

No, the League of Nations was rejected, not by the Republican party, but by the American people; and they rejected it because, in their judgment, the case for it had not been proved. The rejection has frequently been described as the revolt of an exhausted people, sick of war; but the American people were neither exhausted, nor really sick of war. They had lost 50,000 men killed in battle and another 75,000 dead of disease or accident—a mere flea-bite by comparison with Germany's 1,800,000

dead, Russia's 1,700,000, France's 1,400,000, Austria's 1,200,000, Great Britain's 900,000 or even Italy's 650,000. But if our losses in blood were small we actually gained in treasure. The Bureau of the Census estimates the national wealth of the United States at 186 billions in 1912 and at 320 billions in 1922. Deduct, if you will, an increase of 22 billions in the national debt in the same period, and still we emerge with an increase of 112 billions in the decade that included the war.

The League of Nations was rejected, not by an exhausted and disillusioned nation, but by one intoxicated with success and cherishing the dangerous illusion that its own unaided strength was and would ever remain sufficient for its needs. The enemies of the League who were really effective were not the bitter partisans, but the men who honestly believed that the disputed Article X, pledging the military strength of the United States to the support of world peace, was, in fact, a unilateral guarantee. Blandly and blindly they assumed that Europe would always need American strength, but that the time would never come when America would need European strength. A majority of the people shared this belief, and clung to it for twenty years, clung to it until the very hour when a tremendous combination of tyrannies seemed on the point of wiping out the last strongholds of free government.

This is the irony fit to evoke the jeering laughter of the Fates, an irony so tremendous that by comparison with it all the other ironies in our national history pale into insignificance. If the American people could not believe, twenty years ago, in the necessity of arranging for the

protection of the peace and security of all nations by some form of agreement backed by sufficient force to make it binding, why could they not believe? The only possible answer is, because their experience had led them to a different conclusion. Their experience for more than a hundred years had been that of tranquillity undisturbed by any really serious threat from without. The momentary flutter created by Andrew Jackson's thundering denunciation of the French king in 1833 had come to nothing and had been long forgotten; the affair of Maximilian in Mexico had been settled satisfactorily without any military exertion; Cleveland's sudden assault upon a startled British court in the matter of Venezuela had produced no more than a momentary tension; and the brush with Spain in 1898 had resulted, not in increased nervousness, but in increased confidence. The only hostile commander in more than a century that this country had had cause to regard with uneasy respect was Lee, the native son; and the Confederacy was completely and permanently dead.

Even the war with Germany had been more sound and fury than stern fighting. It had taught us that we were capable of performing prodigies in raising, equipping, and transporting a gigantic army; and that army once assembled on French soil, had swept to swift and easy victory. Mentally, of course, we were aware that we owed the ease of our victory to the fact that the enemy was three-fourths beaten before we struck him; but emotionally we did not feel this at all. Emotionally, all that registered was the fact that America was still the ever-victorious; and emotion was more powerful than reason.

But what irony can surpass the implication that pros-



perity, security and happiness led America to reject the only feasible plan to insure the permanence of her prosperity, security and happiness?

For emphasis I repeat that no one knows the plan would have been successful. But three things we do know, (a) that it was a plan, (b) that it was the only plan presented, and (c) that without any plan our prosperity, security and happiness were within twenty-four years in more deadly peril than they were in 1917. It is hard to imagine any circumstances under which participation in the League of Nations scheme could have brought us to a worse pass than that to which non-participation brought us by 1941.

Without doubt, it is a cosmic jest, the irony of ironies, this spectacle of a great nation regarding itself as too shrewd to deal with any warlock and proving it by striking hands with the Devil himself. Afraid of a new order created by Wilson, we intrusted its making to Hitler! It is a great jest and a grisly jest, but it is hardly on Wilson.

However, it is the spirit of Wilson, not Wilson in the frail and errant flesh, that Hitler has called from the tomb. The twenty-eighth President has suffered in reputation from the injudicious adulation of friends who have thought it treason to admit any fault or flaw in him. Wilson was a faulty leader because he was afflicted with the typical ignorance of the scholarly; he knew books better than men, but that was only a part of it; it is probable that he also adopted, perhaps subconsciously, the heresy that it is virtuous to divorce reason from emotion. Certainly many scholars, notably scholars of imperial Germany, fell into this error, as a natural reaction against the extreme romanticism that had well-nigh divorced emotion from reason.

But the German attitude is a heresy because it repudiates the cardinal doctrine of the scientific faith it pretends to serve. This cardinal doctrine is that the truth must be accepted, no matter how unpleasant the form in which it appears. The truth is that men, while they may sometimes be reasoning beings, are always emotional beings.

This truth is not relevant to all sciences. It has no bearing on an investigation of the theory of wave mechanics, for example, or an inquiry into the chemical composition of hormones. But it is of the very essence of the science of government. Woodrow Wilson rarely made any concessions to the emotional nature of his fellows; he frequently infuriated them when he might have placated them without sacrificing anything of value; and even more frequently he bewildered them when he might have explained with only trifling expenditure of time and effort. Moreover, there is plenty of reason to suspect that he accounted it unto himself for righteousness that he appealed always to reason and conscience, ruthlessly ignoring passion and prejudice. But in a ruler that is not righteousness. That jeopardizes the promotion of the general welfare, which is the supreme duty of a ruler in a democratic state; and whatever jeopardizes the discharge of a man's duty is a flaw in his conduct.

It is probable that if Wilson had been as clever a psychologist as both Roosevelts put together, still he would have been doomed to defeat. Inability to comprehend the necessity of the League was inherent in the country and could not have been removed by the most skillful appeal. Nevertheless, if Wilson's rectitude had been somewhat less

austere, his moral stature would have been not less but greater.

All that, though, is of the past. Wilson's personal faults are buried with him, and even the shattering blast of Hitler's bugle-horn cannot release them from the tomb. What haunts our minds today is not the sometimes irritating personality, but the statesman who declared, "I am seeking only to face realities and to face them without soft concealments." Did he speak the truth? It seems ever more likely as the harshest sort of realities are thrust every day before our wavering eyes.

We failed to understand when he said, "The day has come when America is privileged to spend her blood and her might for the principles that gave her birth and happiness and the peace which she has treasured." Most of us then favored spending our blood and our might only to assure our own safety; have we progressed beyond that point in twenty-four years?

The question is an embarrassing one, but it is of far greater consequence to the republic than any terms of war, or any terms of peace. Have we realized yet that our own safety is indissolubly linked with the safety of all free peoples, and that ours cannot be assured without assuring that of others? One greater than Wilson said, long before 1917, "none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." It becomes ever more plain that in the crowded modern world this is as true of nations as it is of individual men.

President Roosevelt was criticized for going too far when he said, "Our frontier is on the Rhine," but his real error was one of understatement. Our frontier is farther

away than the Rhine. Our frontier is at the utmost limit of human freedom. Wherever a man is enslaved by violence—a yellow Manchurian, a swarthy Spaniard, an ebony Ethiopian, as well as a blond Norwegian—our frontier is invaded. It does not follow, of course, that we should fly to arms to avenge every border incident; but we should recognize these incidents for what they are—not the inconsiderable troubles of inferior peoples, which we can dismiss with a shrug, but denials of the validity of the principle by which we live, hence denials of our right to our way of life.

Woodrow Wilson knew it and told us the truth; but we laughed him to scorn. That is why his spirit walks again, for in our uneasy minds there is a mocking whisper, a taunting suggestion that if we had not laughed we might not have had to march again into the Valley of the Shadow. Ironic little devils murmur in our ears that it was a fine thing to save our skins by throwing Europe to the dogs of war in 1919, seeing what it has got us—a shrewd thing to blast the diabolical ambition of Wilson in order to make room for the meek benevolence of Hitler. They hail the common sense of hardheaded, realistic Americans who flung aside Woodrow so that they might stand face to face with Adolf! An ironic jest indeed—perhaps the greatest since the streets of an ancient city re-echoed the shout, "Release unto us Barabbas!"

Yet the worst did not befall. Perhaps there is some justification for the bland confidence of Americans that their country is the darling of the gods; for even when, not merely inviting ruin, it expends labor and ingenuity to

make sure that ruin shall fall upon it, that ruin proves incomplete. For twenty years we had been asking for war and at last we got it. Yet when it came, inexplicably and contrary to all logic and reason, Britain stood up for a year, unaided and alone. Contrary to all expectation and all expert opinion, the Russian army's quality proved to be commensurate with its size. Contrary to all oriental calculation, the paralyzing blow at Pearl Harbor did not paralyze, but only enraged. Fate relented, and gave us time.

So, almost miraculously, we have another chance. We have, also, that perambulating conscience of America, Woodrow Wilson, come alive again and speaking in every man's ear, telling us no fairy tales but stern old truths, reminding us that greed is suicidal, that suspicion of all the world is silly, that self-righteousness leads straight to humiliation. That old man is still, as he always was, bitter, but tonic. Possibly we shall hear him even when the troubadours come around again, some other great engineer, some other shrewd Yankee, singing mellifluously of a chicken in every pot and two cars in every garage, dulcetly inviting us to turn from the bleak Presbyterian prophet and put our trust in none of the ancient creeds that stem from Judea, nor in their exponents, whether priest, or presbyter, or rabbi, but solely and completely in the Church of the Holy Dividends, which is the religion of practical men.

Perhaps—yet no man can say more than that we have the chance. Probably no man can say with assurance what we have done after we have acted, nor even for twenty years thereafter; for if there is any conclusion to which

examination of the ironies of American history leads, it is that contemporary estimates are likely to be inaccurate in the extreme.

But is this necessarily a depressing conclusion? It seems to me that it need be so only to a man much more convinced of the rightness of his own views than any man should be, or than any man who has studied American history attentively can be.

Indeed distrust, expressed or implied, of the eternal verity of one's own views is the secret of the survival of this republic. It may astonish Europeans to hear it proclaimed that a real and deep-rooted modesty is of the very essence of Americanism, but it is so, and a little reflection will establish it. The republic has survived because the defeated party has always acquiesced in the decision at the polls, the sole exception having occurred after the election of 1860. But this could not possibly have been repeated year after year had the defeated candidate and his friends been convinced to the bottom of their souls that they alone possessed the truth that is essential to salvation.

We have had in the case of France an appalling demonstration of what happens to a democracy in which there is no realization of the fact that of political principles, too, it may be said that "time and chance happeneth to them all." There is a strange delusion in this country that the weakness of France was the strength of her scoundrels; the truth is it was rather the strength of the conviction of her honest men. Consider how hard it was, even after the fearful lesson of national disaster, for Americans to bring Giraud and De Gaulle together. Yet they were both patriots.

Without doubt, the Third Republic had its scoundrels, but the deadlock that opened the way for the scoundrels was caused by its men of principle who were intransigent. "A principle," said the acid Professor Cornford, "is a rule of inaction which states a valid general reason for not doing in any particular case what, to unprincipled instinct, would appear to be right." At least it was so in France. Honest men would not, perhaps could not, certainly did not, yield their principles far enough to set up an effective, although imperfect, government. The ironies of French history are multitudinous, but Frenchmen apparently have never drawn from them the obvious inference that no man should have so much confidence in the rightness of his own cause that he will check and hinder the operations of the government sooner than admit that there may be a modicum of right on his opponent's side.

Everywhere it is when honest men are hopelessly divided that thieves fill all the offices; in America honest men have always been divided, but never hopelessly so, except in 1860; and the result then was the most fearful convulsion that our country has ever experienced. At all other times honest men, while not convinced by a beating at the polls, have retained enough doubt of their own omniscience to await the outcome peacefully; and the experience of a hundred and sixty-seven years has justified them.

Justified they are, too, by the ironical stories with which the history of their nation is studded; for the last has been first, and the first, last so often that only a fool will say of any man or event in public life, "I know beyond peradventure what must be the outcome of this." It is something worth keeping in mind in these days when the country

approaches some of the most difficult and perplexing decisions it has ever been called upon to make. Some of us are bound to be disappointed; but to despair would be to reject the lessons of our own history. What may seem to be a triumph at the time may lead us to woe immeasurable; but, on the other hand, although we may come away with as great a sense of frustration and defeat as possessed the men of 1787, generations to come may credit us with some wonderful work not unworthy of comparison with the Constitution of the United States.

Even though we do the best we can, Destiny may make sport of us; but, even so, we may yet come to a serene time and look upon our opponents in these perilous days in the spirit in which, when both had grown old, Jefferson wrote to John Adams: "beset with difficulties and dangers, we were fellow-laborers in the same cause, struggling for what is most valuable to man, his right of self-government. Laboring always at the same oar, with some wave ever ahead threatening to overwhelm us, and yet passing harmless under our bark, we knew not how we rode through the storm with heart and hand, and made a happy port. . . . And so we have gone on, and so we shall go on, puzzled and prospering beyond example in the history of men."





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